



AG AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURER PRODUCES 4,000TH AIRPLANE

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Last week at the company's world headquarters and manufacturing facilities, an Air Tractor®502XP, a single-seat agricultural aircraft, was delivered to its new owner during a send-off ceremony attended by employees and local dignitaries. It is the 4,000th airplane Air Tractor has produced since it began operations in 1972.

"After 49 years of continuous production of airplanes, all of us here are really pleased to celebrate this moment," said Jim Hirsch, Air Tractor president. "Only eight years ago we built our 3,000th airplane; now we just surpassed number 4,000. This year we find ourselves in the fortunate position to have historically strong demand for our aircraft. While we are subject to agricultural market ups and downs, our manufacturing continues year after year on a rising trend line."

In this West Texas town of 3,100, Air Tractor employs close to 300 skilled workers, engineers and support personnel, many of whom are second and third generation employee-owners. The airplanes they produce are the most popular of their kind in the world.

The company was founded by Leland Snow, an agricultural pilot, aeronautical engineer and entrepreneur. Before his death in 2011, Snow established an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) providing employees 100 percent beneficial ownership and retirement benefits for their service to the company.

“He felt the ESOP would bring added strength, security and long-term benefits for the company, employees and the community,” recalls Hirsch. Following the ESOP’s inception, employees have taken larger roles in elevating quality standards and productivity, Hirsch noted. “The delivery of the 4,000th Air Tractor reflects our employee-owners’ craftsmanship, pride and commitment to Mr. Snow’s vision of quality and innovation.”

Mike Rivenbark, owner of Moore’s Aerial Applicators, placed his order for the Air Tractor 502XP in late 2020. Once back at his base of operations in Morehead City, North Carolina, Rivenbark will use the airplane to spray crop protection products on farm fields of blueberries, corn, beans and vegetables.

Hirsch remarked that Air Tractor has come a long way since its early days, when in 1975 the company celebrated its annual production of 25 airplanes. “Today, we produce more ag airplanes, and offer more model choices than all our competitors combined. When the world demands more, Air Tractor delivers. That is as true today as it was back in the 1970s.”

At its Olney Texas manufacturing facilities, Air Tractor produces a line of eight aircraft that includes 400, 500, 600 and 800-gallon capacity airplanes powered by Pratt & Whitney Canada turboprop engines. They are used for agricultural purposes, fighting wildfires, narcotic crop eradication, fuel-hauling to remote villages, fighting locust plagues, mosquito control, and cleaning up oil spills in coastal waters. From North, South and Central America, to Australia, Indonesia and China to Spain, Italy, Croatia and Africa, Air Tractor aircraft can be found in more than 40 countries around the world and are supported by a global network of Air Tractor dealers.

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