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NEWS

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SPOTLIGHT:

HELICOPTERS

» **SKYE AVIONICS**

shifts into growth phase

» **702 HELICOPTERS**

adds Part 145 repair station

» **WESTCAN AIRCRAFT**

grows helicopter parts business

Climb out

Skye Avionics shifts into growth phase

STORY BY CHRISTINE KNAUER

On Vancouver Island on the southwestern edge of Canada, Ryan Evans, Skye Avionics' founder and president, is excited about the repair station's future. A new product released in January, two helicopter supplemental type certificates, a new RVSM test service, and responsive customer service has Skye Avionics poised for growth.

"We're adding employees regularly," Evans said. "We're gaining new customers because of our reputation

for excellent customer service and being able to provide AOG support quickly and effectively."

Skye Avionics sells, installs and services avionics for rotary and fixed-wing aircraft as well as manufactures drop cords and custom cables. The family-owned and -operated company supports customers across Canada.

"We service all types of aircraft – from a two-seater Robinson to a Sikorsky S61, from a two-seater Piper Cub to Hawker and Citation business jets," Evans said. "Our largest customers are helicopter owners and operators."

An authorized dealer for many leading avionics and aircraft equipment manufacturers, Skye Avionics represents Garmin, Genesys Aerosystems HeliSAS, Cobham, AEM, Avidyne, Aspen Avionics, Spidertracks, Technisonic, Jupiter Avionics, FreeFlight Systems, Latitude Technologies and others.

"We are always adding to our extensive dealer network," Evans said.

New product

Skye Avionics' expertise goes beyond aircraft service and support, venturing into engineering and design. The company recently announced its latest creation, an interface that allows operators to quickly connect a



Technicians (from left) Keith Bonneteau and Matt Minchau with Skye Avionics founder, Ryan Evans.

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WHAT THEY DO: Skye Avionics is a Transport Canada-approved maintenance organization that sells, installs and services avionics for rotary and fixed-wing aircraft. It also designs and manufactures aviation-related equipment.

EMPLOYEES: 6

FOUNDED: 2006 by
Ryan and Cathi Evans

AEA MEMBER SINCE: 2009



Skye Avionics revived this workhorse for its customer, a logging company. Technicians completely rewired the McDonnell Douglas Helicopter MD 500 and installed a BendixKing KY 196A transceiver, Garmin GTX 327 Mode C digital transponder, ACK A-30 altitude encoder, Kannad 406 AF-Compact ELT and a Technisonic TFM-138 FM transceiver.

portable radio to Cobham Aerospace's new Flexcomm RT-7000 panel-mount tactical radio. The radio, which released in January 2017, is designed for a variety of public safety missions such as law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire suppression, border patrol, search and rescue, electronic news gathering, and surveillance.

The interface is Skye Avionics' second product, following the company's rugged, ergonomic drop cords, which debuted in January 2007. CNC-machined out of aluminum, the drop cords are laser engraved and hard anodized to resist scratching. The cords feature a volume control and long-life switches.

"We used our experience with helicopter operators and the knowledge we've gained over the last 20 years to design drop cords that can take the abuse that they're given and keep on working," Evans said.

Skye Avionics manufactures both the Flexcomm RT-

7000 interface and the drop cords at its shop at Campbell River Airport, four hours northwest of Vancouver.

In addition, the service center holds STCs engineered in-house for a Bell 407 Check Instrument Warning System and MD500 LED Start Pump Modification. The Bell 407 Check Instrument Warning System alerts pilots to an imminent exceedance, monitoring Ng, MGT and TRQ indicators. The warning system is ideal for long line missions, helicopter emergency medical services, and tactical operations, according to Evans.

Skye Avionics' STC for the MD500 LED Start Pump Modification replaces the OEM start pump light with an LED, making the part more durable and cost-efficient.

"The LED light is less susceptible to breakage, and it's quick and easy to install," he said.

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SKYE AVIONICS

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Starting out

Evans started his aviation career after high school when he worked for Canadian Regional Airlines, washing and cleaning aircraft.

"I would finish my duties and then help the mechanics with some basic maintenance repairs," he said. "Then I moved into towing airplanes around Vancouver International Airport."

In April 2001, Evans graduated with a degree in avionics technology with honors from Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, a polytechnic institute in Calgary, Alberta. He went on to work for service centers at Langley Regional Airport and Abbotsford International Airport in British Columbia. After successfully creating and managing an avionics shop for a helicopter operator, Evans struck out on his own, starting Skye Avionics in 2006.

"We are not your typical avionics shop," Evans said. "We travel at a moment's notice to anywhere in the country.

We've designed and built many custom solutions for customers. Our avionics AMEs can perform sheet metal modifications. One AME also has a mechanic rating, which brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our team."

In December 2016, Skye Avionics expanded, adding a shop at Victoria International Airport to accommodate the increasing number of customers, providing installations, pitot-static checks, transponder testing, RVSM testing and ELT inspections.

"In recent years, we started servicing more business jets and customers located on south Vancouver Island," Evans said. "By establishing a base in Victoria, we can quickly provide service anywhere on the Island or even in Vancouver."

The company holds the exclusive Canadian distributor rights for Spidertracks and Northwall flight helmets. Technicians are factory trained on Garmin's integrated flight decks, glass cockpits and ADS-B equipment.

"We have Garmin G500H kits for the Robinson R44, Bell 206, Bell 407 and Airbus helicopters that allow for minimal downtime," Evans said. "Our capabilities

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include manufacturing a completely new instrument panel to fit any avionics stack that you would like to have.”

Skye Avionics continues to expand into new markets. In 2016, the service center purchased a new, state-of-the-art RVSM test set.

“We’re the only shop on Vancouver Island that can perform RVSM testing on jets to 55,000 feet,” Evans said. “We are working to reach this market and serve it. We’re entering new areas of manufacturing and getting AS9100 certified. We’re reaching out to operators and exhibiting at trade shows. It takes dedication and patience in creating processes and going through this phase of growth.” □



Skye Avionics technicians engineered and built a complete avionics package for a Bell 412. The package included three audio panels, two VHF and two FM radios, sat phone, 11 passenger positions, transponder/encoder and portable FM provisions. The team pre-fabricated the package using a custom-built pedestal, allowing for limited aircraft downtime. The installation, including clamping, string tying and testing, took just five days.

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