

# ANNUAL -2024- REPORT



VERTICAL AVIATION  
INTERNATIONAL



# 2024: Rebranding Is Finalized

## Governance Changes: Bylaws

### **The VAI Board adopts new bylaws, updating member categories and Board structure.**

With the adoption of new bylaws, the Board of Directors fulfilled its vision of rebranding the association to embrace the diversity of vertical aviation professionals and aircraft worldwide. The nine-member Board also voted to add two seats, to better represent all industry sectors. The results of the first board elections under the revised bylaws will be announced at VAI's Annual Membership Meeting at VERTICON 2025.

### **Updated Member Categories**

#### **Vertical Aircraft Operator Members.**

Comprises commercial/private operators of vertical-capable aircraft, including unmanned aircraft systems, and government services providers.

**Honorary Members.** Recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the industry, including award winners, past Board chairs, and former VAI presidents and CEOs.

#### **Manufacturer and Supplier Members.**

Represents companies that build, supply, provide services to, or support vertical aviation.

**Individual Members.** Includes pilots, mechanics/engineers, students, and other industry professionals.

### **Board of Directors Restructuring**

**Commercial/Private Operators.** Three seats each for small, medium-sized, and large operators, based on fleet size.

**Government Services Providers.** Two seats for those from government, military, and public-service sectors.

## Operations Changes: Website and Publications

**The VAI staff relied on user feedback to make improvements.** VAI staff completed rebranding with the launch of new communication tools reflecting years of research and surveys to understand the needs and preferences of VAI's website users, members, and publication subscribers. The changes are more than a facelift; the new features are designed to enhance the user and reader experience.

### **A Revamped Website**

**Verticalavi.org.** A key feature is the new Resource Hub, which provides easy access to videos, articles, regulatory summaries, and other digital materials. Other areas of note include the Regulatory Action Center with its guidance on regulations, rulemaking, and standards; an



That's a wrap! New signage was installed on VAI's Alexandria, Virginia, headquarters as one of the final rebranding events in 2024.

expanded Career Development section for those looking for opportunities or learning about the profession; a user-friendly member dashboard; and a dedicated Member Benefits page outlining the more than 32 programs and discounts available to VAI members.

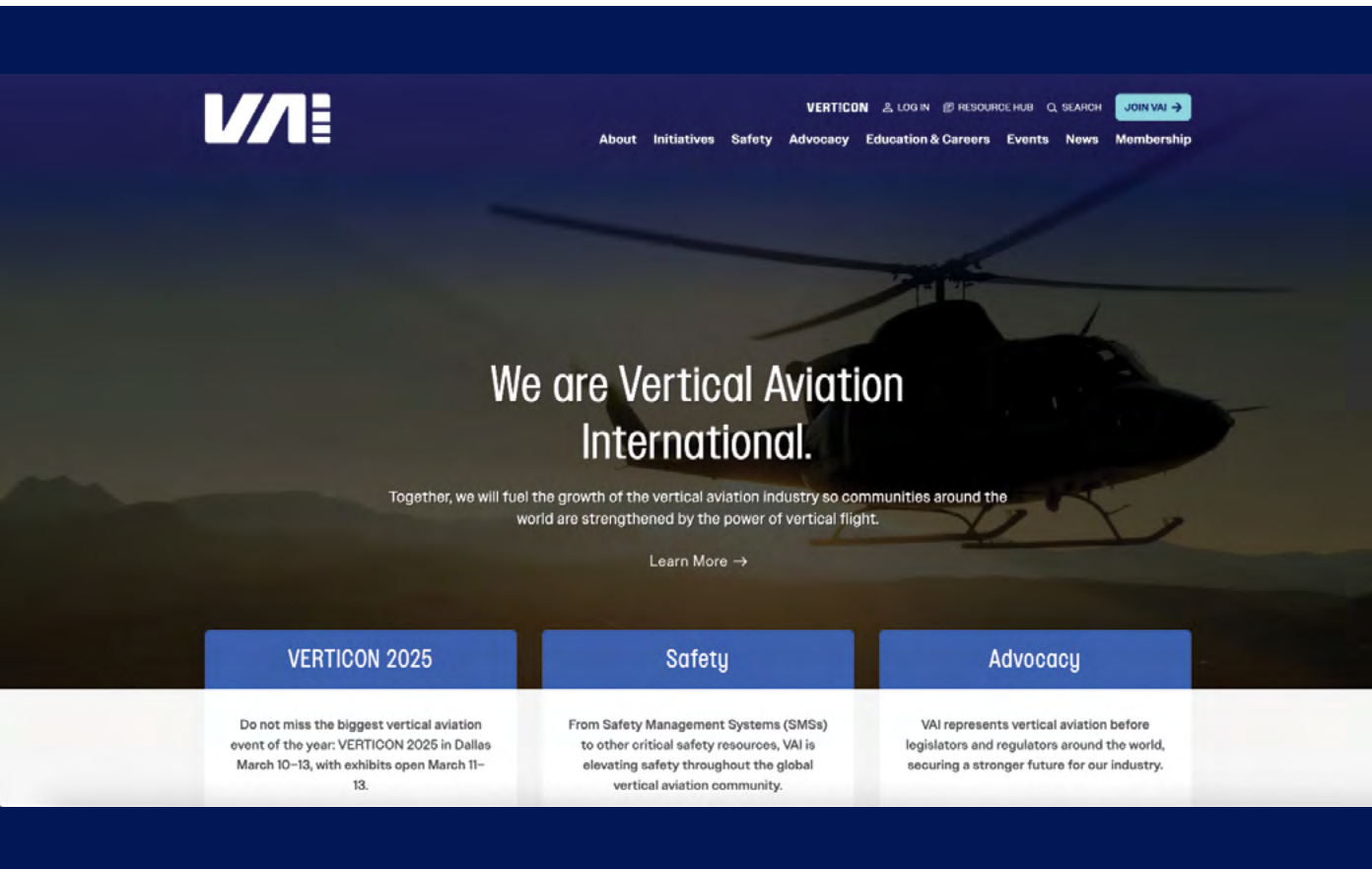
**Refreshed Publications**

**VAI Daily.** A new name graces VAI’s news aggregating daily that reaches 38,000+ subscribers in 137 countries. The e-newsletter also sports new categories that align with the redesigned website

and better reflect the diversification of the vertical flight industry.

**POWER UP.** VAI’s quarterly magazine has a new name inspired by VAI’s tagline, and a new look. It features industry news, expert insights, and updates on VAI’s work to advance vertical aviation through connection, safety, education, communication, and member support.

Subscriptions to VAI publications are free. To sign up, visit [verticalavi.org/news](https://verticalavi.org/news).





# VAI Board of Directors

## 2024–25 Board

**Mark A. Schlaefli**, Chair

**Brian Jorgenson**, Vice Chair

**Rick Kenin**, Treasurer

**Paul Gottwig**, Assistant Treasurer

**James A. Viola**, President & CEO

**Sarah Arnold**, Director, Corporate Affairs & Corporate Secretary

**Nicole Battjes**, Director, Commercial

**David McColl**, Director, General Aviation

**Randal R. Rowles**, Director, Commercial

**Stacy Sheard**, Director, Commercial

**Robert Miller Stallings**, Director, General Aviation

**Michael Romanowski**, Special Advisor – Emerging Technology

**Francois Lassale**, Special Advisor – International

**Arthur L. Herold**, Legal Advisor



The VAI Board met in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, during EUROPEAN ROTORS, the annual VTOL show and safety conference organized by the European Helicopter Association and EASA and produced by VAI. Here, some Board members break for a photo op with an Airbus H175 owned by NHV Group, one of the 18 aircraft on display. From left: Paul Gottwig, Brian Jorgenson, David McColl, Nicole Battjes, Mark A. Schlaefli, Stacy Sheard, Rick Kenin, and Francois Lassale.

# Dear VAI Member



2024 was transformative for VAI. In the year since your Board of Directors made the strategic decision to rebrand as Vertical Aviation International, the organization has made substantial advances across our five key initiatives.

Our rebranding was pivotal, as it grew our scope and influence to represent the entire vertical aviation industry. We understood that all vertical flight aircraft share common needs—infrastructure, access to airspace, and personnel—and we understand the power behind uniting this industry. When the FAA announced the new powered-lift category in 2024, VAI was perfectly positioned to advocate for all stakeholders.

Our engagement efforts, particularly with US governmental entities, proved fruitful this year, largely due to the efforts of VAI's US regional representatives. Successes such as preserving New York City's West 30th Street Heliport and overcoming policy challenges for tour operators—especially in Hawaii—underscore our effective advocacy at various governmental levels.

VAI staff members also advocated for members' needs as industry representatives on 36 US and international regulatory, safety, and standards groups. In addition, VAI hosted quarterly meetings of our International Partnership Program, which includes 18 international associations working toward common safety and operational standards.

We launched a new safety benefit, the Operational Risk and Resilience Accreditation Program, that has

met with high participation among our members (see story, p. 13). Promoting safety continues as a driving force at VAI, and our safety-centric conferences further this agenda by fostering dialogue on best practices and regulatory compliance.

On other fronts as well, VAI staff were working hard to develop resources that support you, our members. Our Regulatory Affairs team created the VAI Debrief, where our experts distill complex FAA regulations into actionable insights for members. Our transformation of working groups into industry advisory councils was also critical in keeping communication channels open between industry and VAI and providing platforms for member engagement and leadership development.

Finally, addressing the workforce shortage remained a priority. Our efforts, highlighted by our student membership and scholarships and our career fair and educational events at HAI HELI-EXPO (now VERTICON), emphasize VAI's commitment to nurturing talent and supporting military personnel transitioning to civilian vertical aviation careers.

As you read our 2024 Annual Report, you will see how our decision to rebrand has positioned VAI to lead and unify the vertical aviation community. As we enter Year 3 of our strategic plan, our focus remains on providing connection, advocacy, safety, education, and support for our members' success to fuel the industry's continued growth and resilience.



**Mark A. Schlaefli**  
2024–25 Chair  
VAI Board of Directors



**James A. Viola**  
President and CEO  
VAI



# VAI Strategic Initiatives 2023–25

## 1. Unify the Industry

- Completed rebranding, demonstrating through a refreshed website and publications that VAI is a unifying, credible, legitimate association well positioned to represent the entire industry and grow with it as it diversifies.
- Streamlined regulatory processes to facilitate the progress of advanced air mobility and implement policies that support and promote vertical aviation.
- Added 63 small-business operators and manufacturers/suppliers that joined to amplify VAI advocacy and to access member benefits to help them reach their business goals.

## 2. Engage the Global Value Chain

- Achieved successes at the US regional level, including:
  - Keeping New York City’s West 30th Street Heliport (KJRA) open
  - Overturning state-mandated reporting requirements for air tour operators in Hawaii, preserving federal oversight of aviation.
- Coordinated with other general aviation associations on:
  - The FAA reauthorization bill, ensuring vertical aviation priorities are addressed
  - Regulatory input on important regulatory matters including BVLOS and the powered-lift SFAR.
- Led legal action defending US air tour operators from draconian impacts of air tour management plans and collaborated with ACHHEL on negotiations to protect airspace and park access for Chilean air tour operators.
- Collaborated with international vertical aviation associations and regulatory authorities such as ICAO, EASA, EHA, ACHHEL, and others on harmonizing regulations.

## 3. Elevate Safety Culture

- Launched new safety benefits: ORRA, for establishing a safety culture and managing risk, and Flight Data Monitoring, for analyzing flight data to improve safety.
  - Insurer USAIG agrees to subsidize ORRA fees for its participating policyholders.
- Drove awareness about FAA mandates for new Part 91.147 and Part 135 operators to implement SMS programs and promoted use of SMS benefits.
- Held VAI’s Air Tour Safety Conference, focused on elevating safety standards in the sector.
- Teamed up with FlightSafety International to add courses to VAI Online Academy on improving safety and meeting regulatory requirements.

Year 2 progress on VAI’s initiatives to position the vertical aviation industry for growth.

## 4. Develop Business Resources

- Formed the Small Business Initiatives IAC to develop resources for VAI small-business members.
- Hosted VAI webinars on topics ranging from regulatory compliance to maintenance trends to management.
- Debuted the VAI Debrief, a publication that distills FAA regulations into actionable steps and explains implications at organizational and industry levels.

## 5. Create a Workforce Pathway

- Transitioned VAI working groups to industry advisory councils (IACs) to improve communication channels for the global industry to discuss challenges and solutions.
- Developed and led career development initiatives, including:
  - VAI’s first career development town hall with SoCal Rotors to help new and potential pilots prepare for vertical aviation careers
  - HAI HELI-EXPO’s Industry Career Fair, which drew in 200+ professionals, and Mil2Civ Workshop, which attracted 175 military personnel transitioning to civilian vertical flight careers.
- Added six high schools to the Utah Rotor Pathway Program (RPP), continued engagement with the North Dakota RPP, and began talks with other states about starting an RPP.
- The Workforce Development IAC helped VAI create professional development materials that contributed to student membership growth of 35% year over year and continued efforts to build a pipeline of qualified personnel to meet industry demands.



### Contact Your VAI Executive Leadership Team

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**Cade Clark**, chief government affairs officer

**Sarah Arnold**, director, corporate affairs & corporate secretary

[President@verticalavi.org](mailto:President@verticalavi.org)



# Connection

## Highlights

**ROTOR Commemorative Issue.** The 75th anniversary commemorative edition of ROTOR Magazine published in January, capping a yearlong celebration.

**Air Tour Safety Conference.** VAI inaugurated this conference to provide air tour operators with practical ways to improve safety. One of the conference's most important sessions, presented by a panel of FAA and industry experts, focused on safety management system implementation.

**HAI HELI-EXPO® (now VERTICON).** With attendance at its largest since COVID, Expo was selected for *Trade Show Executive's* Fastest 50 Award for attendance growth in 2024.

**New Publications.** As part of the rebranding, VAI launched new versions of its quarterly magazine and daily e-newsletter. VAI Daily, the news aggregating daily, began publication in August. POWER UP Magazine debuted with its new design and name in September.

## Communications Key Metrics

**38,000+ readers in 137 countries** subscribe to VAI Daily

**870 press releases** from VAI members were posted in VAI Daily

**50,000+ readers in 60+ countries** receive POWER UP Magazine

## Conventions Key Metrics

**HAI HELI-EXPO** *Anaheim, California, USA*  
**15,000 attendees • 625 exhibitors • 87 countries**

**EUROPEAN ROTORS** *Amsterdam, the Netherlands*  
*(produced by VAI)*  
**4,680 attendees • 234 exhibitors • 63 countries**

**Air Tour Safety Conference**  
*Honolulu, Hawaii, USA*  
**108 attendees • 5 exhibitors • 5 countries**

**Aerial Work Safety Conference**  
*Boise, Idaho, USA*  
**415 attendees • 42 exhibitors • 7 countries**

### Contact Your VAI Conventions Team

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**VAI events and publications keep the vertical aviation industry connected and informed.**

## @VAI Events: Connecting with Customers

For vertical aviation-related suppliers like GPMS, VAI makes it easy to reach end users and share new technologies and better, safer ways of operating. The Waterbury, Vermont, company, specializes in health and usage monitoring systems (HUMS) for helicopters, handling the development, manufacturing, distribution, service, and support in-house. The company regularly exhibits at all three of VAI’s annual conferences: VERTICON (formerly HAI HELI-EXPO®), the Aerial Work Safety Conference, and the recently reinaugurated Air Tour Safety Conference.

“VAI offers various ways to reach out—the daily e-newsletter, the magazine, and webinars,” says Ronnie Ries, vice president of marketing for GPMS. “But the biggest benefit is being able to exhibit at all of VAI’s trade shows and conferences. We want to be where our customers are, and these events are the perfect place to meet them.”

**“VAI’s training sessions, conferences, and events let operators, who are literally busy fighting fires every day, learn about new technologies and better ways to operate. These events make it easier for us to share them.”**

**— Ronnie Ries**

Vice President of Marketing, GPMS

Moreover, Ries sees VAI as a partner in promoting safety and innovation to enhance the vertical lift experience, supporting GPMS’s mission.

“We love that VAI promotes safety, not only to operators, but also in working with the NTSB, FAA, and other organizations,” says Ries, who has nearly 20 years of experience in military, commercial, and aftermarket sales.

“VAI’s membership cost is a relatively minimal expense for all of the value and exposure we get from it.”



The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department performs a training rescue mission with its Bell 412 EPX equipped with GPMS Foresight MX, a predictive health and usage monitoring system.



At HAI HELI-EXPO 2024, Josh Kethan, GPMS director of customer success, demonstrates the rotor track and balance capability of Foresight MX HUMS.



# Advocacy

## Highlights

**FAA Reauthorization Act.** VAI engaged with Congress to ensure the legislation addressed vertical aviation industry priorities of aviation safety, workforce development, and advanced air mobility.

**Human External Cargo Regulations.** VAI collaborated with the FAA for a long-needed policy adjustment, increasing safety and reducing regulatory confusion (see story).

**Chilean Helicopter Association (ACHHEL).** Sharing lessons learned fighting US National Park Service missteps in developing air tour management plans that deny operators access to airspace, VAI helped ACHHEL develop proposed revisions to the draft management plan in the Patagonia conservation area that threatened a similar outcome for Chilean air tour operators.

**UAS BVLOS Operations.** VAI urged the FAA to implement performance-based standards for beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operation of unmanned aircraft systems and preserve the current safety level to protect others using low-altitude airspace such as air ambulance and utility operators.

**International Civil Aviation Organization.** VAI sponsored and supported ICAO's first annual advanced air mobility symposium.

**FAA Vertiport Engineering Brief 105A.** VAI led the development and submission of joint industry comments to the FAA's draft EB 105A, Vertiport Design, successfully recommending that the FAA designate vertiports as a subset of heliports.

## Key Metrics

**96,000+ emails sent** by a VAI grassroots coalition successfully opposing closure of New York City's West 30th Street Heliport (KJRA)

**15 speaking engagements representing industry interests** to US and international government and organizational audiences

**18 international associations/advisors** in the VAI International Partnership Program, which promotes common safety, operational standards, and best practices in vertical flight

**92% of VAI priorities were included in the FAA reauthorization bill** that passed Congress

**8 ICAO panels/working groups** supported by VAI staff and members

**250+ US bills tracked**, with VAI stopping a number of burdensome, anti-industry legislation

### Contact Your VAI Advocacy Team

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Your membership powers VAI's ability to represent the concerns of our industry.

## Collaboration Leads to Simplified Regulations

In December 2024, the FAA revised its policy on fall protection equipment used by utility line workers during human external cargo (HEC) operations. Harnesses compliant with ANSI/ASSP Z359.11-2021 meet or exceed performance requirements and can be safely employed. The decision came after nearly two years of collaboration between operators, VAI, and the FAA.

“The coordinated effort of the UPAC through VAI was absolutely essential,” says Pete Anderson, senior manager, Helicopter Operations Department of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, and chair of VAI’s Utility Patrol and Construction (UPAC) Industry Advisory Council. “Without this policy change, it would have really slowed, if not stopped HEC being performed across the United States in support of the electric grid system.”



**The strong relationships between UPAC, VAI, and our FAA reps ... were a critical piece of this successful collaboration.”**

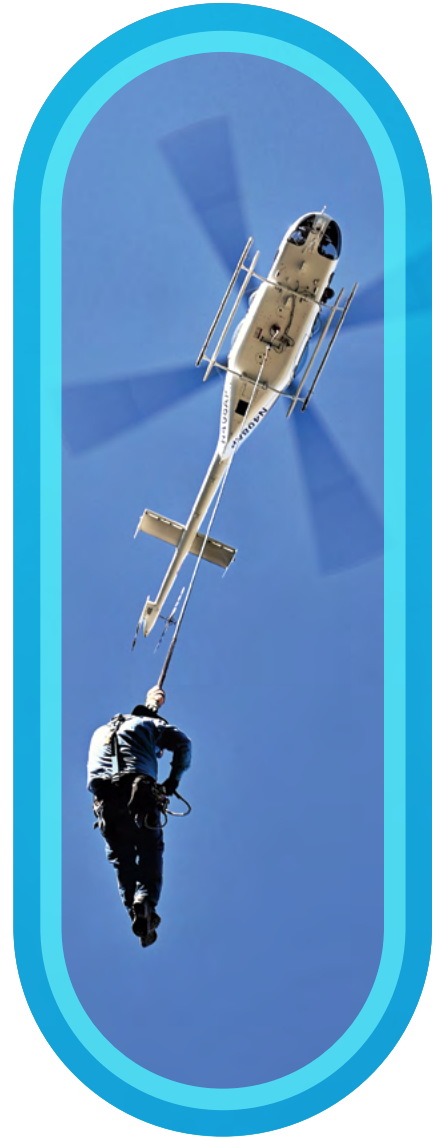
— Pete Anderson

Senior Manager, Helicopter Operations Department of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, and Chair of VAI’s Utility Patrol and Construction Industry Advisory Council

Jeremy Van Vliet, vice president of operations, A&P Helicopters, agrees, “At A&P Helicopters, we primarily support utilities in their construction and maintenance activities. Solving this problem was critical to our success as well as the success of our clients.”

The FAA’s new policy aligns with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard, which is accepted by OSHA, utilities, unions, and harness manufacturers. Much of the collaboration to reach the decision took place at VAI events, including VERTICON (formerly HAI HELI-EXPO®), Aerial Work Safety Conferences, and UPAC Industry Advisory Council meetings, according to Van Vliet.

“Collaboration also took place outside of these events, but the events were where the face-to-face interactions took place that were a key piece of crossing the finish line on this issue. There were many instrumental players during the process. I’m grateful for everyone who helped.”



A&P Helicopters performs human external cargo operations from a Bell 407 during power-line maintenance.



# VAI Member Benefits

## Power Up Your Growth



### Connection

- Save on Attending VAI Events
- News Coverage in VAI Daily\*
- VAI Media Advertising Discounts\*
- VAI Member Directory Listing\*
- Save on Exhibiting at VAI Events

*\*Company-Exclusive Benefit*



### Advocacy

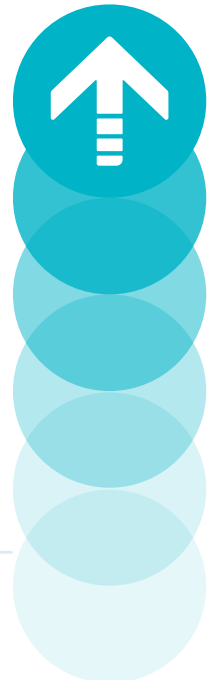
- Exclusive Analysis of Legislative & Regulatory Impacts



### Safety

- Flight Data Monitoring with Hands-On Support
- Discounts on BowTieXP Risk Assessment Software
- SafetyScan Global Accident & Incident Research Tool
- Safety Awards (Pilots, Mechanics/Engineers, Operators\*)
- Safety Management System (SMS) Evaluation & Coaching\*
- Discounts on SMS Software from 4 Leading Industry Providers\*
- Maintenance SMS Program\*
- Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP)\*
- Operational Risk & Resilience Accreditation (ORRA) Program\*

*\*Company-Exclusive Benefit*



**Contact Your VAI  
Membership Team**

**Teresa Farmer**, director, membership  
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VAI fuels your growth in the vertical aviation industry.



**Education**

- Save on VERTICON Educational Opportunities
- Scholarships for VAI Student Members
- 30% Discount on King Schools Courses
- Purdue Global Tuition Discount (up to 20%)
- VAI Online Academy
- Online Library of Safety Education Sessions



**Support for Member Success**

- Technical, Regulatory & Legislative Assistance
- Legal Resources Portal
- Health Insurance for Groups & Individuals through LIG Solutions
- Industry Advisory Council Participation
- Discounts on JSFirm.com Job Board Postings\*
- Flight Training & Checking Program with Helicopter Institute\*

*\*Company-Exclusive Benefit*



**Coming in 2025!**

**CIRRO by AirSuite Operations & SMS Program\***

**Predictive Health Usage & Monitoring System (HUMS) Program from GPMS\***

*\*Company-Exclusive Benefit*

Check [verticalavi.org/benefits](https://verticalavi.org/benefits) to See Our Latest Member Benefits



# Safety

## Highlights

**Air Tour Safety Conference.** VAI hosted its Air Tour Safety Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, welcoming more than 100 air tour operators, safety experts, and pilots from five countries.

**Operational Risk and Resilience Accreditation (ORRA) Program.** High engagement in this new program included six members completing guided self-assessments and four beginning the Bronze accreditation process (see story).

**SMS and ASAP Programs.** Subscribers saved \$31,000 through VAI member-only discounts, with 16 operators participating in safety management system (SMS) programs.

**Flight Data Monitoring.** Intermountain Life Flight became the first VAI member operator to sign up for the benefit with Truth Data Insights.

## Key Metrics

**27 downloads** of ORRA Program complimentary standards and recommended practices

**49 new subscribers** to SafetyScan, the global database of vertical aircraft accidents and incidents

**\$20,000 savings** realized by VAI members through the Flight Training and Checking program benefit

**10 SOS videos** released, each with an accompanying poster and article



**Contact Your VAI  
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**VAI's safety programs scale to fit individual pilot/owners and organizations of all sizes.**

## ORRA: Taking the Next Step in Safety

VAI's new Operational Risk and Resilience Accreditation (ORRA) Program, launched at HAI HELI-EXPO® 2024, makes it easy for flight operators to start managing risk and improving processes. It's already helping operators like Two Bear Air Rescue identify areas for improvement.

"We operate safely, but we thought a formal program could help us take the next step," says James Heckman, chief pilot. "The internal audit was very helpful. It gave us a roadmap for strengthening our safety."

Based near Whitefish, Montana, Two Bear Air Rescue operates a specially equipped Bell 429 helicopter supporting search-and-rescue efforts across the Northwest United States.



**Helicopters operate in their own world. VAI recognizes that reality and helps us work together to make vertical aviation even safer. While other programs are more for fixed-wing aircraft, ORRA is made for helicopter operators. I encourage all operators to consider it."**

**— James Heckman**  
Chief Pilot for Two Bear Air Rescue

ORRA takes a flexible and evolving approach that's adaptable to each operator regardless of size or industry. Two Bear Air Rescue has nine personnel and six Flathead County sheriff deputies on staff.

"During the coaching sessions, we realized that safety guidelines don't exist for search-and-rescue operations. We fly in the worst weather at night over rugged terrain, and every mission is unique," says Heckman. "With ORRA, we're helping to define those parameters while making practical improvements that enhance our safety."

ORRA participants earn Bronze, Silver, or Gold accreditation after reaching specific milestones. Two Bear Air Rescue is focused on Bronze accreditation for now.



Two Bear Air Rescue of Whitefish, MT, conducts search-and-rescue training with its hoist-equipped Bell 429. Over the past decade, the organization has completed more than 1,000 missions.



# Education

## Highlights

**Texas Civil Air Patrol Inaugural Rotary Summer Camp.** VAI education staff provided guidance to cadets developing the CAP's first-ever rotary education program.

**Rotor Pathway Program.** Six high schools joined the Utah Rotor Pathway Program that partners industry, schools, and government in preparing students for vertical aviation careers.

**Outreach to Underserved Students.** The education director has opened discussions with a diversity organization about reaching out to schools and students in underserved communities about vertical aviation as a career opportunity.

**Scholarships.** VAI added three scholarships to its current four offerings: two from Winco (see story) and one from Bell. The new scholarships were available to VAI student members applying for the 2025 scholarship program year.

**VAI Online Academy.** VAI teamed up with FlightSafety International to add a range of courses to support members' training needs, improve safety, and meet regulatory requirements.

## Key Metrics

**HAI HELI-EXPO 2024** *Anaheim, California*

**490 students** completed 33 professional education courses

**3,000+ attendees** participated in 50+ Rotor Safety Challenge (RSC) presentations

**910 attendees** attended briefings from 20+ OEM and supplier presenters

**900+ FAA WINGS, AMT, and IA** renewal credits awarded to aviation professionals attending education sessions and technical briefings at HAI HELI-EXPO and completing education programs through the VAI Online Academy

**600+ views** of RSC presentations on VAI Online Academy

**6 scholarships** awarded to VAI student members pursuing vertical aviation mechanic/engineer certification

**38 schools** now participate in the Utah Rotor Pathway Program, a growth of 6 in 2024

**Contact Your VAI  
Education Team**

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**VAI's many training opportunities help you improve skills and prepare for the future.**

## Broadening VAI's Scholarship Offerings

Pilots and aircraft mechanics/engineers now have access to two new VAI scholarships thanks to Winco, an Aurora, Oregon-based operator that supports the power-line construction and maintenance industry. Spearheaded by Winco President Trevor Walker and utility helicopter pilot David McColl, the scholarships provide aspiring pilots and aviation technicians financial assistance toward earning a commercial helicopter pilot rating and an aviation maintenance technician certificate, respectively.

"VAI gives us an audience, a way to reach more pilots and mechanics. And there's a bit more clout behind a scholarship when it comes from VAI and a board member," says McColl, who also serves on VAI's Board of Directors. "VAI can administer the scholarships more effectively than we ever could on our own."



**No one succeeds alone. People still open doors for me. If I can help open the door for someone else, why not?"**

**— David McColl**

Director of Safety and Training, Winco

As Winco's director of safety and training, McColl oversees the safe operation of 12 MD500-series helicopters across the United States. An industry role model, he participates in safety events, volunteers his time, and works to improve the workforce.

"There's a pilot and mechanic shortage for sure. The scholarships aren't really intended to attract new individuals, but to support those already committed to their careers," says McColl. "It's our way of saying, 'We believe in you. Keep going.'"



David McColl, Winco utility helicopter pilot and director of safety and training, flies an MD 369FF in support of power-line construction and maintenance.



# Support for Member Success

## Highlights

**Industry Advisory Councils.** VAI transitioned its working groups to industry advisory councils, making it easier for members to participate and keep VAI informed about important issues.

**Small-Business Initiative.** VAI formed the Small-Business Initiatives Industry Advisory Council (SBI IAC) to develop programs and recommend best practices for small-business members.

**Flight Training and Checking Program.** The 13 VAI member operators using this benefit saved \$20,000 with the VAI discount and got their crews back in the air quickly through the Helicopter Institute.

**VAI Member Lawyers.** VAI opened membership to lawyers to build a legal directory for member use. VAI debuted its first-ever lawyer panel and Ask a Lawyer sessions at HAI HELI-EXPO® in Anaheim, California.

**VAI Rundown.** VAI's quarterly e-newsletter recaps the latest activities and upcoming events and has high member engagement.

**Providing Regulatory Expertise.** VAI staff represented industry during vital regulatory initiatives and responded to FAA requests for comments on a wide variety of issues directly affecting the industry.

## Key Metrics

**14 IACs** were reconstituted from VAI working groups; members identify priorities and develop solutions for industry challenges

**370+ VAI members volunteered** on VAI IACs, a 54% increase over 2023 participation levels

**60+ new small businesses joined VAI:** 32 operators and 31 manufacturer & supplier members

**10 SBI IAC meetings** where IAC members brainstormed programs and tools to support members



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**Membership gives you access to programs and experts that help you succeed.**

## Active IAC Leads to More Networking, Learning

Of the 14 all-volunteer industry advisory councils (IACs), VAI's Safety IAC stands out as one of—if not the—most active. Cochairs Kristen McDaniel, director of safety for Air Center Helicopters, and David Dziura, owner of SafeRotors, lead the IAC.

Previously a working group, the Safety IAC was established to help prevent incidents and accidents. To that end, the group develops and curates safety resources, including educational courses, mentoring programs, videos, articles, and online tools.

“We also plan and execute topical programs at VERTICON and organize the VAI Safety Zone, a booth where attendees can engage with experts and learn about best practices,” says Dziura.

The IAC's 46 members represent operators, manufacturers, and experts from various industry sectors. Many have years of experience starting and overseeing safety management systems.



**I want to help keep the industry's priorities focused on the things that truly matter: ensuring people don't get hurt and keeping the industry storn for years to come.”**

**— David Dziura**  
Owner of SafeRotors and Safety IAC Cochair

“By being a part of the Safety IAC, I'm able to tap into the experience of other group members and find ways to enrich the safety program at my company,” says McDaniel, who has 15 years of experience in the rotorcraft industry. “I'm also able to represent our unique operation and our commitment to safe operations across the globe.”

Dziura, who promotes safety in a variety of VAI videos and webinars, enjoys learning and sharing best practices.

“I love flying helicopters. My excitement for it drives me to be the best pilot and helicopter professional I can be. Participating in a group like this gives me the opportunity to hear and talk about issues and learn different solutions,” says Dziura, who is an FAA designated pilot examiner. “The friendships I've made here are incredibly valuable, both personally and professionally.”



These photos show a cross-section of the industry sectors represented on the Safety IAC: Air Center Helicopters, the company cochair Kristen McDaniel works for, is a small-business operator providing global airlift support services to US and international clients. Through SafeRotors, cochair David Dziura, pilot and FAA DPE, provides training and practical test services.



# VAI OUT AND ABOUT

A1



A2



A3



A4



A5



**A1:** At EAA AirVenture, 2024–25 chair Mark Schlaefli (left) and James Viola (third from left) visit with VAI member and Rotor Pathway Program school UND Aerospace. **A2:** VAI's Cade Clark congratulates Billy Nolen, Archer chief regulatory officer, with a plaque commemorating Archer's Washington, DC, office opening. **A3:** The VAI Board poses with VAI International Partnership Program members at the last HAI HELI-EXPO in Anaheim, CA. Next year: VERTICON 2025 in Dallas, TX. **A4:** VAI staff at EUROPEAN ROTORS in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. VAI produced the show, which is organized by the European Helicopter Association and EASA. **A5:** During a tour of VAI member JBI Helicopters facility in Pembroke, NH, VAI's Josh Rousseau (center) and Board treasurer Rick Kenin (far right) meet with, from left, President Kurt West, Director of Maintenance Patrick Vaughn, and Chief Technician Doug Boudreau. At Kurt's feet: Onyx, the glue who holds it all together.



**B1**



**B2**



**B3**



**B4**



**B5**



**B6**

**B1:** Raquel Girvin, FAA administrator for the Western-Pacific region, updates attendees on policy changes at VAI's Air Tour Safety Conference in Honolulu, HI. **B2:** Jake Tomlin (left), president of VAI member Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters, John Becker (center), Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters COO, and 2024–25 chair Mark Schlaefli, owner of Dakota Helicopters, share a light moment during a meeting of the US National Parks Overflight Advisory Group in San Francisco, CA. **B3:** VAI's Chuck Street (left) moderates VAI's first career development town hall featuring aerial firefighting pilots (l-r) Josh Murphy, VAI Board member Paul Gottwig, Mike Sagely, and Ethan Jensen in Los Angeles, CA. (Don Kelsen Photo) **B4:** James Viola represents the vertical aviation industry at ICAO's 2024 AAM Symposium. **B5:** At the final HAI HELI-EXPO, the show floor bustles with the largest attendance since COVID. **B6:** VAI's Aerial Work Safety Conference in Boise, ID, features a Meet the Regulators session, where attendees can ask FAA panelists questions.



# About VAI

## Overview

Vertical Aviation International (VAI) is the trade association for the civil vertical aviation industry, representing 1,190 aviation businesses and more than 17,400 aviation professionals in 69 nations. VAI is dedicated to fueling the growth of the vertical aviation industry through connection, education, advocacy, and safety so that communities around the world are strengthened by the power of vertical flight.

## VAI Members

### Vertical Aircraft (VA) Operators

(membership benefits extend to all employees)

- VA Operator Member – Commercial/Private. Any operator of vertical-capable aircraft principally for commercial or private use
- VA Operator Member – Government Service. Any federal, state, or municipal governmental agency or governmental entity operating VA.

### Honorary Members

- Individuals who have distinguished themselves through efforts directed toward advancing or improving the vertical aviation industry
- All past chair and past presidents and CEOs of the association

- Salute to Excellence Lifetime Achievement and Hal Summers Award winners.

## Manufacturer & Supplier Members

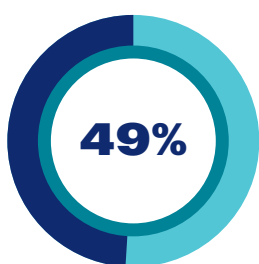
(membership benefits extend to all employees)

- A prime airframe or powerplant manufacturer directly engaged in the manufacture or development of VA, essential flight components, and/or equipment
- A supplier, service group, or an organization/association providing supplies or services for the vertical aviation industry
- A manufacturer of equipment integral to non-VA flight operations, including airframes, powerplants, and parts
- Otherwise active or involved in support of the vertical aviation industry.

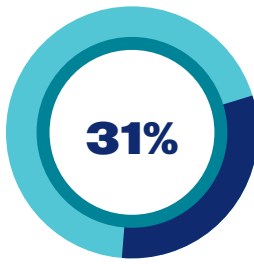
## Individual Members

- Licensed or certificated pilots
- Licensed or certificated mechanics/engineers
- Individuals interested in contributing to the industry but don't fit the requirements of any other class of membership.

## VAI Membership Makeup



INDIVIDUALS



MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIERS

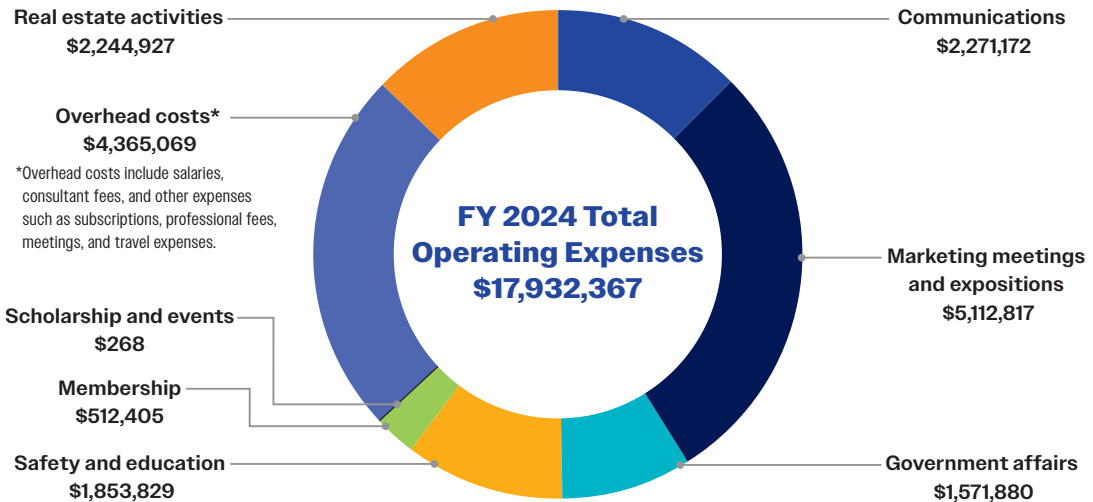
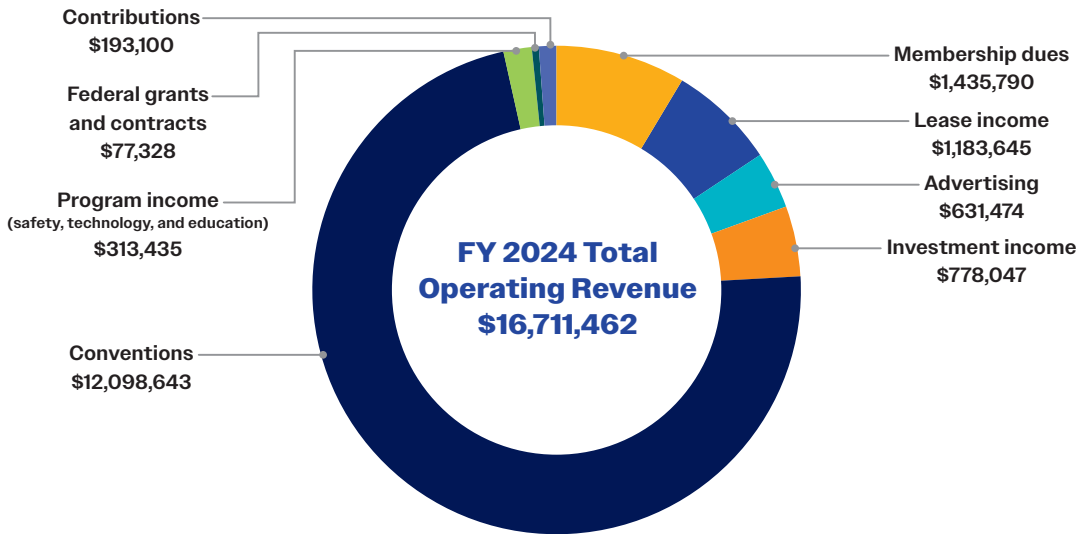


OPERATORS

**Total:  
17,448  
Vertical  
Aviation  
Professionals**

## Financial Overview

We are excited to share VAI's annual revenue and expenses. These graphs represent the audited 2023–24 fiscal year (FY 2024), beginning Jul. 1, 2023, and ending Jun. 30, 2024. The annual report reflects our work during the 2024 calendar year. In fiscal year 2024, the organization rebranded from Helicopter Association International, Inc. to Vertical Aviation International, Inc. and celebrated the 75th anniversary of the association. This investment totaled \$1.2 million. We remain optimistic about our future growth and are committed to transparency and continued success. VAI members can view these charts and the last five years of audited financial statements on our website under the About tab.





# Let's Connect!

## We Want to Hear from You

### Reach Out with Your Questions

Our members are the heart of VAI, and our staff are committed to working collaboratively with members to address their needs. Throughout this report, you'll find contact information for staff in the sections reflecting their primary areas of support. Reach out to them with your questions or requests. You can always contact Membership at [Member@verticalavi.org](mailto:Member@verticalavi.org).



VAI staff in the lobby of the Alexandria, VA, headquarters.

### Easily Find VAI Member Companies

VAI welcomes and represents the entire vertical aviation community: all the people and organizations that build, fly, fix, operate, and supply the global fleet of vertical-capable aircraft. VAI's Membership Directory lists operator and manufacturer and supplier members. It's a great resource when you're looking for a trusted industry partner. [members.verticalavi.org/vai-membership-directory](https://members.verticalavi.org/vai-membership-directory)

### Use Your Benefits

VAI members have access to more than 32 services or discounts developed to help you power up your skills, build connections, elevate safety, optimize your business—and more. Member companies—and all their employees—have access to company-exclusive benefits not available to individual members. [verticalavi.org/membership/explore-our-member-benefits](https://verticalavi.org/membership/explore-our-member-benefits)



VAI communication channels run in both directions.

## How You Can Hear from VAI

VAI's media channels keep members updated about VAI and the vertical flight industry. We offer a variety of resources designed to inform and enrich.



### POWER UP

Our quarterly magazine features industry news, expert insights, and updates on VAI's work to advance the industry. [verticalavi.org/power-up-magazine](https://verticalavi.org/power-up-magazine)

### VAI Daily

Every business day, VAI aggregates and publishes a newsletter with the latest vertical aviation news stories. [verticalavi.org/news/vai-daily](https://verticalavi.org/news/vai-daily)



### VAI Annual Report

The annual report provides a calendar-year lookback of VAI's work on its members' behalf. [verticalavi.org/about/vai-annual-reports](https://verticalavi.org/about/vai-annual-reports)

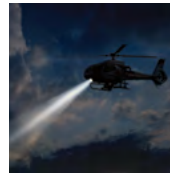


### VTOL Advocate

Learn about the latest efforts of VAI's Government Affairs team and US regional representatives as they advocate for the industry, dispel misconceptions, and keep vertical aviation priorities top of mind with legislators, government agencies, and local and regional organizations. [verticalavi.org/advocacy/legislative-action-center](https://verticalavi.org/advocacy/legislative-action-center)

### VAI Rundown

Members receive a quarterly e-newsletter recapping the latest activities and upcoming VAI events. [verticalavi.org/rotor-rundown](https://verticalavi.org/rotor-rundown)



### Spotlight on Safety

The Safety team releases a monthly video, poster, and article on a safety tip to help you enhance safety in your daily operations. [verticalavi.org/safety/spotlight-on-safety](https://verticalavi.org/safety/spotlight-on-safety)



### Viola's Flight Report (VFR)

VAI President and CEO James Viola briefs members monthly via video about the work staff is doing. [verticalavi.org/violas-flight-report-vfr](https://verticalavi.org/violas-flight-report-vfr)



### VAI Webinars

VAI drops a new webinar monthly on topics of interest to the industry. [verticalavi.org/webinar](https://verticalavi.org/webinar)



### VAI Debriefs

When the FAA issues new regulations, our experts break them down in a VAI Debrief, distilling key implications for members and the industry. [verticalavi.org/advocacy/regulatory-action-center](https://verticalavi.org/advocacy/regulatory-action-center)

**We encourage you to take advantage of all the opportunities to connect with VAI through your membership!**



# The VAI Team

## VAI Leadership



**James A. Viola**  
President and CEO



**Michael Hertzendorf**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Gade Clark**  
Chief Government Affairs Officer

### Government Affairs

**Theresa Marr**, director, government affairs

**Katia Veraza**, assistant director, state government affairs & regional relations

**Josh Rousseau**, Northeastern US regional representative

**Chuck Street**, Western US regional representative

### Operations & Regulatory Affairs

**Chris Martino**, senior director, operations & international affairs

**Chris Hill**, senior director, safety

**Greg Brown**, director, education & training services

**Zac Noble**, director, flight operations & maintenance

**Amber Harrison**, director, regulatory affairs

### Member Services

**Teresa Farmer**, director, membership

**Linda Jackson**, membership & data coordinator

**Mashiyat Ahsan**, research & data analyst

### Communications

**Gina Kvitkovich**, senior director, communications

**Jay Clark**, IT director

**Bailey Wood**, director, strategic communications

**PJ Barbour**, video & multimedia producer

**Jayne Wood**, assistant director, publications & media

**Phyllis Utter**, graphics manager

**Christine DeJoy**, senior editor

**Andrew Parker**, copy editor

### Marketing

**Katerina Bedoya**, director, marketing

**Shawna Kerns**, assistant director, marketing

### Conventions

**Charlotte Zilke**, senior director, conventions

**Tanya Kirchner**, director, conventions

**Emily Monahan**, manager, exhibits & experience

**Erin Sweeney**, exhibits specialist

**Alyssa Miller**, conventions coordinator

### Finance

**Wayne O'Brien**, finance manager

**Mirian Montano**, finance manager, operations & accounting

**Rigels Mema**, finance assistant

### Executive & Administrative

**Sarah Arnold**, director, corporate affairs & corporate secretary

**Ashten Brown**, manager, operations & administrative liaison

### Partners

**Zena Curry**, HR director, Marcum LLP

**Teresa Poirier**, HR director, Marcum LLP

**Tom Glista**, safety manager, Crown Consulting Inc.

**Racheal Moses**, membership sales, The Wyman Company

**Katie White**, exhibit, sponsorship & advertising sales, The Wyman Company



VAI/Oscar Bernardi



VAI/Julian Belke



VAI/Domenico Marchi



VAI/Ross Burrows



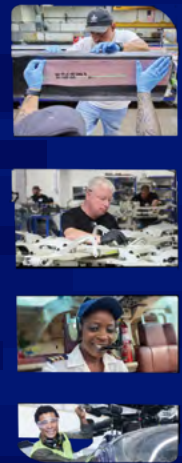
VAI/Nicholas Avis



VAI/Manuel Hincapie



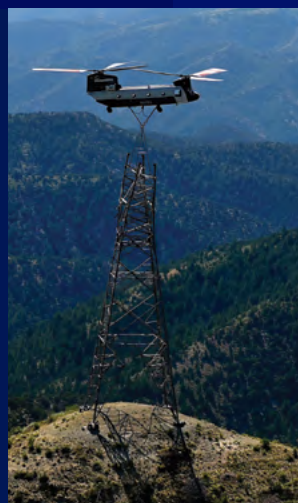
VAI/Tony Lumpkin



Helicopters perform missions fixed-wing aircraft can't because of their unique abilities to fly in all directions, hover, and take off from and land almost anywhere without infrastructure. VAI has identified 44 ways helicopters serve the world. Learn more and watch the video at [verticalavi.org/what-a-helicopter-can-do](http://verticalavi.org/what-a-helicopter-can-do).



VAI/GHC Aviation



VAI/Michael Stark



VAI/Skip Robinson



VAI/Christi Forbes



VAI/Mark Clancy



VAI/Eric Main

# Vertical Aviation Industry Events, April 2025 – March 2026

## 2025

Apr. 1–6	<b>Sun 'n Fun Aerospace Expo</b>	Lakeland, Florida, USA
Apr. 8–10	<b>MRO Americas 2025</b>	Atlanta, Georgia, USA
Apr. 23–25	<b>HeliOffshore Conference</b>	Athens, Greece
Apr. 25–28	<b>Aviation Insurance Association Conference</b>	Orlando, Florida, USA
May 3–4	<b>Great Alaska Aviation Gathering</b>	Palmer, Alaska, USA
May 6–7	<b>Business Aviation Safety Summit</b>	Charlotte, North Carolina, USA
May 19–22	<b>Xponential 2025</b>	Houston, Texas, USA
May 20–22	<b>VFS Forum 81</b>	Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA
Jun. 10–12	<b>FAA-EASA International Aviation Safety Conference</b>	Cologne, Germany
Jun. 16–22	<b>Paris Air Show*</b>	Paris, France
Jul. 14–18	<b>APSCON / APSCON Unmanned*</b>	Phoenix, Arizona, USA
Jul. 21–27	<b>EAA AirVenture Oshkosh*</b>	Oshkosh, Wisconsin, USA
Aug. 5–7	<b>Latin American Business Aviation Conference &amp; Exhibition</b>	São Paulo, Brazil
Aug. 12–14	<b>Global Autonomous Systems Conference</b>	Anchorage, Alaska, USA
Aug. 26–28	<b>Aviation Safety InfoShare</b>	St. Louis, Missouri, USA
Sep. 20	<b>WAI Girls in Aviation Day</b>	Worldwide Online Events
Sep. 23–24	<b>VAI Air Tour Safety Conference**</b>	Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
Sep. 23–Oct. 3	<b>ICAO General Assembly</b>	Montréal, Canada
Oct. 14–16	<b>NBAA-Business Aviation Conference &amp; Exposition</b>	Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
Oct. 27–29	<b>AAMS Air Medical Transport Conference*</b>	Omaha, Nebraska, USA
Nov. 4–6	<b>FSF International Aviation Safety Summit</b>	Lisbon, Portugal
Nov. 17–20	<b>EUROPEAN ROTORS*</b>	Cologne, Germany
Nov. 17–19	<b>NAAA Ag Aviation Expo</b>	Reno, Nevada, USA
Dec. 2–4	<b>ICAAMS-3</b>	Bangkok, Thailand
Dec. 7–9	<b>VAI Aerial Work Safety Conference**</b>	Boise, Idaho, USA

## 2026

Mar. 9–12	<b>VERTICON 2026**</b>	Atlanta, Georgia, USA
Mar. 19–21	<b>WAI International Women in Aviation Conference*</b>	Grapevine, Texas, USA
Mar. 23–26	<b>AEA Conference</b>	Dallas, Texas, USA

\*VAI Exhibiting—Come Visit Our Booth!

\*\*VAI Event—We Look Forward to Seeing You!

Please Check Registration Websites for the Most Current Information



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