



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Owen Watkins Sets First World and National Records for Helicopter Speed Over a Recognized Course

*In a Robinson R44 Raven II, SureFlight's Co-Founder & President also set Transcontinental Speed Record, West to East*

**COATESVILLE, Pa – March 12, 2026** – [SureFlight Aircraft Completions](#), a premier one-stop shop for paint, interior, and avionic aircraft completion and refurbishment projects, announced today its Co-Founder and President, Owen Watkins, set three rotorcraft flight speed records in his Robinson R44 Raven II achieving:

- World Record, Speed Over a Recognized Course, Los Angeles, CA to New York, ratified by Federation Aeronautique Internationale ([FAI](#)), World Air Sports Federation.
- Transcontinental Speed Record, West to East, ratified by National Aeronautic Association ([NAA](#))
- US National Record Speed over a Recognized Course, Los Angeles, CA to New York, also ratified by NAA

Watkins grew up around the aviation industry and began flying at the age of 22. Currently, he is a licensed pilot for airplanes, helicopters, hot air balloons.

On August 15, 2025, after two months of planning, Watkins and [Robinson Helicopter Company](#) dealer, Ethan Crane, lifted off from Torrance, CA, in a R44 Raven II. The flight plan was broken into two-hour legs. After an elapsed flight time of 80 hours, 55 minutes, and eight seconds (including sleeping, fueling, and maintenance), flying an average speed of 30.42 mph, 26.43 kts, they completed the coast-to-coast flight crossing the Verrazano Bridge in New York City.



“I thought, what better a way to take delivery of a new helicopter than lift off the maiden voyage chasing a record setting flight,” said Watkins. “From planning to completion, this flight tested me physically and mentally. It was an incredible experience that demonstrated the capabilities of the aircraft and a determined pilot who dreamed big and persisted to achieve something no one else had done before.”



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Although the fueling logistics were carefully planned by Watkins and Bruce Sagnor, a longtime friend and fellow pilot, challenges arose that threatened the record-setting flight. First, in Benson, AZ, Watkins had to self-fuel on a ramp that was 115 degrees F. The clear skies turned to

scattered thunderstorms as the flight proceeded to El Paso, TX. The final challenge was overcoming the mental and physical fatigue on the final push from Bentonville to New York City.

Watkins dedicated these records to his father, Robert Watkins. In 2010, their first cross-country trip together was in a Carbon Cub single-engine GA aircraft from Yakima, WA, to Coatesville, PA; a plane his father still flies today.

As President of SureFlight, Watkins is responsible for operations management, strategic planning initiatives including new capability development, quality systems, and FAA certifications, and serves as the Repair Station Accountable Manager. He holds ATP Pilot Licenses and Instructor Ratings in both fixed wing and helicopter, and commercial Hot Air Balloon.

SureFlight's state-of-the-art facilities accommodate exterior paint, interiors and avionics with:

- ISO 9001:2008 and AS9100 quality certified FAA Repair Station
- Temperature-controlled Double Down Draft Paint Hangar is capable of fitting two S-92 airframes side by side or up to a Hawker 800
- Interior completion center equipped with German-made Duerkopp-Adler sewing machines to digital leather skiving machines
- Cockpit avionic experts install & troubleshoot cutting edge navigation, situational awareness, workload reduction, and safety technology
- [Newly opened Utah facility](#), adjacent to the Spanish Fork airport, doubles capacity for fixed wing and rotocraft custom interior and upholstery projects

### **About SureFlight, LLC**

Founded in 2009, [SureFlight](#), is a one-stop shop for vertical aviation completion, specializing in expert aircraft paint, interior, avionics, and refurbishment completions. Located 30 nm West of Located 30 nm west of Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) at Chester County G.O. Carlson Airport (KMQS). SureFlight is an ISO 9001: 2008 and AS9100 quality certified FAA Repair Station (7SUR489B).