ROBINSON BEGINS TAKING ORDERS FOR R44 CADET

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Robinson has begun taking orders for its new twin-seat derivative of the Raven, the R44 Cadet, as it closes on US Federal Aviation Administration certification.

The piston-single trainer features at Robinson’s booth at Heli-Expo. It sells for $339,000 and is powered by the Lycoming 0-540-F1B5 piston engine.

Company president Kurt Robinson said, speaking at Heli-Expo today, thatEASA certification will follow, and he hopes FAA validation will smooth the way. “We believe it should be more of a minor approval, but that said, it’s [EASA's] call to make,” he says. “It will be a priority for us to get it through as quickly as we can.”

Robinson boosted output of its light, general-purpose helicopter range by 5.5% to 347 units last year, compared with the 329 aircraft produced in 2014.

The four-seat, piston-engined R44 was again the top-selling rotorcraft in the world by volume, with 152 Raven IIs and 44 Raven Is delivered worldwide. The company also handed over 117 four-seat, turbine-powered R66s and 34 of the smaller R22s.

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Robinson says 60% of deliveries were to customers outside of the USA, primarily to Australia, China, South Africa and Europe. Robinson recently celebrated delivery of its 700th R66.

Despite a strong performance in 2015, Robinson expects to “hold steady” in 2016 and might even be challenged by a “soft” economy and strong US dollar, which hurts sales abroad.

“There’s a lot of people waiting because the dollar is so strong,” Robinson says, adding that many potential clients are seeking second-hand models.

“Every dealer I talk to; everybody right now wants to buy a used ship," he says. "There’s a huge market for it and they’re trying to find those."

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