

**What:** Stratos Aircraft

**What it does:** Building a single-engine, very light jet aircraft

**Pictured:** From left, Stratos Manufacturing Manager Chris Robinson and Engineering Manager Carsten Sundin

**Where:** 253 SE Franklin Ave., Redmond

**Employees:** 16

**Website:**  
[www.stratosaircraft.com](http://www.stratosaircraft.com)

**Facebook:**  
<http://bit.ly/2gVodE7>



(Jarod Opperman/Bulletin photo)

# Redmond firm's new jet takes first flight

By Joe Ditzler • *The Bulletin*

More than eight years after Stratos Aircraft came into being in Central Oregon, a test pilot flew its first prototype aircraft, a single-engine jet, from Redmond Airport.

The test flights Nov. 21 and Dec. 12 went well and revealed little more than what the aircraft makers expected, said Stratos Engineering Manager Carsten Sundin, in this case variations in the aerodynamic forces that affect the control stick.

"Right now, the control stick forces are heavy and that's something we're working on," he said Friday.

Stratos Aircraft, the company, for almost a decade flew below the radar, toiling away with little notice in a shop on SE Franklin Avenue in Redmond that grew to 10,500 square feet. They produced a prototype aircraft they say is like no other. Now, Sundin said, the push is on refining the aircraft into something the company can mass produce, and to find more investors to help make that happen.

"While we were developing it, we much preferred to go quiet and get the job done and then show up with a finished airplane, which is sort of what we did," he said.

Stratos CEO Michael Lemaire in August 2008 told *The Bulletin* the company needed \$150 million to build its version of a small jet that the Federal Aviation Administration would certify for production. Friday, Sundin said that figure is more like \$200 million, and the cost to buy the aircraft has risen to somewhere above \$2.5 million.

The Stratos 714, according to its makers, is the fastest aircraft of its kind, a single-engine very light jet. Very light jets weigh less than 10,000 pounds. The FAA in October certified the Cirrus Vision SF50 for production, the only single engine, very light jet certified so far.

The Cirrus Vision may be the first, but the Stratos 714 makers say their jet will fly higher, faster and farther. Stratos executives said the plane, which is made of mostly carbon-fiber composite materials, will cruise at 415 knots (477 mph) at an altitude of 30,000 feet and cover 1,500 nautical miles on one tank. It's designed to carry a pilot, three passengers, their luggage and 400 gallons of fuel.

"Plus, there's nothing else that looks like this out there," said Chris Robinson, Stratos manufacturing manager. "It's going to be a

head turner."

Wealthy owner-operators are the Stratos target market. Sundin said he's certain that once the Stratos 714 is FAA certified, the company will be hard-pressed to keep up with demand. Stratos is planning to build another prototype and another 12,000-square-foot facility for aircraft production next year.

"There's actually a lot of wealthy people that fly bigger business jets," he said. "They simply don't need the bigger jets, but they want the performance."

Powering the jet is a Pratt & Whitney JT15D-5 turbofan engine. Originally, the design called for a Williams International FJ44-3AP, but 1½ years ago, that changed and delayed the project, Sundin said.

"They've worked with a lot of startup companies and they've all failed," he said. "So at the point at which we really needed to get the engine, they declined to work with us."

Elsewhere, the Stratos engineers took existing technology and adapted it to fit their needs, said Robinson and Sundin. Many components are made in-house, using a battery of computer numerical control, routers and lathes in the original workshop a stone's throw from the company offices on SE Franklin. A 3-D printer allows designers and technicians to make lightweight, plastic copies of components like landing gear forks and aircraft tires for fitting purposes.

The résumés of Stratos engineers and technicians include big companies like Boeing but also well-known and former Central Oregon aviation companies such as Lancair, Epic, Windward Performance and Cessna. Other local firms, such as Composite Approach and Electronics International Inc. also provide talent and technology.

"These guys (at Stratos) are stand-up guys," said David Primer, in sales and tech support at Electronics International. "They're intelligent and smart and coming up every day with new ways to fit instruments to their needs and flight systems."

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**Q:** How long does it take, without hitches, to go through FAA certification?

**A: Chris Robinson:** Without any hitches is the caveat. From the stage we're at, if we were properly funded, about three years.

**Q:** Are you properly funded?

**A: Carsten Sundin:** We are going to continue at the current pace and even do some hiring and expand some facilities. But to really accelerate the pace and get it done in three years, we're looking for additional investments.