

DESIGNER  
AVIATION

## Cirrus Design

*Using Innovation to Create a "Personal" Airplane Revolution*

In 1984, when Alan and Dale Klapmeier launched their first kit airplane, the VK-30, they had little idea that they would eventually be transforming private aviation. "Our dream was to design and build affordable airplanes that would appeal to a more mainstream audience," says Alan Klapmeier, chairman of Cirrus Design. "We believe there are sound economic reasons for aircraft ownership and have built the company around airplanes that are safe, affordable and intuitive to fly."

Three design generations and thousands of airplanes later, Cirrus Design is the leading builder of single-engine, piston-powered aircraft, and its SR22 remains the top seller in its class. While the company has grown to 1,250 employees, and with state-of-the-art facilities in Duluth, Minnesota, it has not wavered from the Klapmeier brothers' original vision of combining innovation with an enticing value proposition for "personal" aircraft ownership.

"Making it easier to fly has changed everything," notes Klapmeier. "We have also designed comprehensive financing, insurance and training programs like Cirrus Access and Cirrus Finance to make ownership more accessible and affordable. The idea is to provide a turnkey solution."

Cirrus continues to accelerate the evolution of its SR22 and SR20 lines. Last year, the company made 700 modifications to the third generation model of the SR22-G3. Cirrus engineers eliminated 50 lbs. in the wing assembly—already considered one of the most weight-efficient wing structures in the industry—while increasing its strength. The new SR22-G3 also has an extended range, improved aerodynamics, and an enhanced ice-protection system.

This year, it is the SR20's turn for a makeover. Lighter, stronger, and two inches taller, the new SR20-G3 incorporates technical advances like LED recognition lights, advanced avionics like the WAAS-certified GNS 430W for enhanced vertical guidance, and improved handling. It cruises at 155 knots with a range of 627 nautical miles.

**ALAN KLAPMEIER, CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER, CIRRUS DESIGN**

**Q:** What do you mean by "personal" airplane transportation?

**A:** It's our longstanding belief that an airplane is a wonderful lifestyle product that should be for more than just pilots. We design our aircraft to be easy to fly to appeal to a wider audience. We have businessmen using Cirrus aircraft to reach out-of-the-way clients, or retirees visiting grandkids. We've also launched unique financing, insurance, training and even ownership sharing programs to make it easier to fly.



Cirrus is also busy designing new aircraft. The company is taking orders on its new SR Sport—a single-pilot light aircraft scheduled to be launched next year. While its price tag will appeal to entry-level fliers, Cirrus is incorporating quality features like modern avionics, lightweight composite construction and an ergonomic interior. Like every other Cirrus, the SRS will have the Cirrus Airframe Parachute System (CAPS). The 55-ft. diameter parachute is now credited with saving 21 lives in nine deployments.

Perhaps the most eagerly anticipated Cirrus Design is its new "personal" jet—the latest extension of the Klapmeiers' vision. While there is no firm release date, Klapmeier says that "The-Jet" will cost about a tenth of some business jets currently on the market. "It's roomy inside and looks beautiful and sleek," says Klapmeier. "But it's not going to be any more difficult—and in some ways it will be easier—to fly than our other airplanes. It will also be exceptionally fun."

It isn't difficult to imagine that the Klapmeiers mandated "fun" into the design parameters of The-Jet. Given their history of success, The-Jet could lift "personal air transportation" into the stratosphere.

**Q:** Could you describe a recent one?

**A:** Our Cirrus Access program provides new owners with a professional pilot who is also a certified flight instructor. He becomes your mentor pilot for a year, teaching you to be able to fly solo anywhere in the country safely. Just getting a license doesn't mean you can fly safely. Customers get utility out of the plane immediately. The instructor also serves as your corporate pilot and aircraft manager, simplifying aircraft ownership even more.