



Press Release

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Vertical Flight Society's Hirschberg Receives NASA Exceptional Public Service Medal

Award recognizes non-government employees for exceptional contributions to NASA's mission

Fairfax, Virginia, USA, May 30, 2024 — The Vertical Flight Society (VFS) today announces that VFS Director of Strategy Mike Hirschberg has received the Exceptional Public Service Medal (EPSM) from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The prestigious EPSM recognition “Is awarded to any individual who was not a Government employee during the period in which the service was performed. This award is granted for exceptional contributions to NASA’s mission.”

During the NASA Ames Research Center’s “2023 Presidential Rank & NASA Honors Awards” ceremony, held on May 22, 2024, some 73 individual and 27 group awards were given to NASA employees, contractors and groups, including many NASA employees and teams working on advancing vertical flight, advanced air mobility and planetary exploration rotorcraft. Of the 100 awards, Hirschberg was the only individual award recipient who was neither a NASA employee nor contractor. The awards were presented by Dr. Eugene L. Tu, NASA Ames Research Center Director, and Dr. David J. Korsmeyer, Ames Deputy Director.

“Receiving the EPSM award was the most humbling honor in my 33-year career,” Hirschberg said. “The incredible achievements of the other 99 recipients — including many by VFS members — was a tour de force of scientific breakthroughs, advancements and career accomplishments by the nation’s aerospace science and technology research leaders.”

Hirschberg was nominated last year by Dr. Bill Warmbrodt, Chief of the Aeromechanics Branch at NASA Ames in Mountain View, California. [The citation read:](#) “For exceptional international leadership and advocacy of vertical lift technologies and aggressive support of advanced air mobility development and workplace diversity.” Warmbrodt, who was the first recipient of a VFS Vertical Flight Foundation (VFF) scholarship in 1977, was also recognized for his 45 years of service to NASA at the ceremony.

Hirschberg served as the Executive Director of the Society for 12 years, beginning in 2011, when it was then known as the American Helicopter Society (AHS); Hirschberg stepped down from the executive role last year to better use his talents in the pursuit of the Society’s goal of advancing vertical flight. [The NASA nomination](#) read in part, “For exceptional leadership during his tenure as the Executive Director [where he] transitioned the organization to the more properly named Vertical Flight Society (VFS).” In addition, VFS “began supporting and organizing the electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) revolution in 2013. The VFS continues to be the leading international organization for the eVTOL sector engaging industry, academia, and government.”

The nomination continued, “Hirschberg has been an international leader and advocate for vertical lift technologies, writing many articles and commentaries on the promise of advanced aerial mobility (AAM) and building industry-wide support for NASA's AAM initiatives.”

The NASA write-up also noted the Society's [workforce initiatives](#), as “a leader in this transitional period of vertical flight to address the future vertical lift workforce to be inclusive and diverse. Mr. Hirschberg has written a series of articles and commentaries on workforce and diversity, and has been a vocal advocate for more inclusive and accessible work environments. Mr. Hirschberg has quantified the huge gap in women and minority vertical flight engineers in the vertical lift community. Through the student chapters of the Vertical Flight Society, NASA's Aeromechanics Branch in particular have been successful in addressing this gap with early diverse career hires.”

The nomination concluded, “Mr. Hirschberg has demonstrated excellence in leading both the technical revolution in vertical lift, and transforming its workforce for the better.”

Founded as the American Helicopter Society in 1943, the Vertical Flight Society is the global non-profit society for engineers, scientists and others working on vertical flight technology. For more than 80 years, the Society has led technical, safety, advocacy and other important initiatives, and has been the primary forum for interchange of information on vertical flight technology.

VFS is @VTOLsociety on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Vimeo](#) and [YouTube](#).

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