

## ICON Founder Kirk Hawkins Dies in Wingsuit Crash

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August 21, 2025



Kirk Hawkins, the often controversial founder of ICON Aircraft, died Tuesday in a wingsuit accident in the Swiss Alps. Hawkins, 58, was with three other wingsuiters who jumped from a helicopter near the peak of the Eiger at 13,000 feet. During his glide along the east flank of the famous peak he struck trees and was killed. Swiss authorities are investigating.

Hawkins and longtime friend Steen Strand founded ICON in 2006 with a goal nothing short of turning the recreational aviation market upside down. Their A5 amphibious flying boat was meant to be a relatively inexpensive (\$189,000), safe, modern and easy-to-fly mount for the weekend warrior to experience the exhilaration of flight. By the time it hit the market, the price had ballooned to more than \$300,000. A few high-profile crashes, including baseball star Roy Halladay, drew attention to ICON's marketing materials depicting low-altitude maneuvers in the aircraft.

In April of 2016, ahead of the planned start of production, a sample sales contract was released that caused major controversy because it allowed the company to monitor pilots while flying and included clauses that required them to be supportive of the company and promise not to sue. The agreement had to be transferred to the new owners if the plane was sold. The contract soured many deals. Hawkins left the company in 2018, and it went bankrupt in 2024 and was sold to an equity firm for \$15.8 million, a tiny fraction of the capital raised to build factories and get the aircraft to market.

His longtime business partner and ICON cofounder Strand paid tribute to Hawkins as a risk-taker who "devoured life experiences" and had a knack for getting out of tough situations. "He was damn good at assessing risks, probably because he took so many," Strand said in social media posts. "He'd get you into tricky situations, but he's also the one you wanted beside you when things got dicey."