



Peter Walper

Managing Member ▸ Thermal Cam USA

“We started out with a drone and then realized that we could do a much better job delivering a superior data set if we started looking at the wind industry outside of the box.”

▸ What does Thermal Cam USA do for wind?

We’re a drone aerial inspection company, but our forte is that we work with large wind companies using third-party mapping software such as EdgeData and their AI analytics engine, EDDIE. EdgeData allows us to communicate with the onsite superintendent and the back-office engineers about specific issues and solve these issues quickly, economically, and safely. That communication sets us apart. Having a technology partner like BladeEdge gives us a leg up.

Most wind companies have in-house drone divisions or national contracts. Utilizing these resources at a local level for minor jobs is not economical or timely. We respond: “We’ve just had a hail storm; we think we have issues on these four towers.” Our flight talents and mapping success have given us a higher level of communication where we understand our clients’ field operations to the point we are almost a subset of their company and can solve these issues now.

▸ What is a typical day like for you at Thermal Cam USA?

Thermal Cam USA covers more markets than just wind, although wind is one of our bigger markets. We have flown turbines almost since Day One.

We fly solar, utilities, aggregates, and oilfield. We work with other software companies to supply data to solve issues or concerns these companies may have. For example, we use an exciting and cutting-edge software developed by ONDAKA. We fly a location or facility and document specific areas photographically. ONDAKA, with their AI systems, produces an augmented-reality representation of that site.

Clients can view this site and the equipment on this site, touch the computer screen of an iPad or desktop in the field or in the office and view any piece of equipment. Touching the screen on, say, a specific motor or valve results in a screen pop-up detailing motor specs, maintenance records, maintenance protocol, PPE required, safety procedures, any data you require. This data can be pre-

sent to our clients, across their different divisions, GIS, maintenance, engineering, purchasing, whoever. Mothusi Pahl, chief commercial officer, recently presented at Rice Alliances Startup Round up at OTC, with ONDAKA winning an award as one of the top 10 most promising entrepreneurial startups.

▸ What makes Thermal Cam USA unique when it comes to the wind industry?

Thermal Cam USA is in the neighborhood and open 24/7, available, now. We don’t compete against the national firms. If anything, we complement them.

We understand the wind market and our wind clients. We know what we are doing in wind simply because the wind industry has trained us in their procedures and processes. We have also trained them in the various uses of drones.

We now have a synergy with our clients where we are growing together within the changing wind world. They call; we are there, and we deliver.

▸ How do you work with a customer when they come to you with a particular challenge?

Sometimes the challenge is simple: “We think there are issues on these particular towers. Go fly them.” Sometimes it’s more difficult: “We think we have warranty issues or potential blade failure because we are seeing this.” By defining the scope of work where Thermal Cam USA can know exactly what data and information to bring to the table, the client can resolve these issues faster and easier within a shorter time frame.

We also like to bring more to the table than required. For example, if there is one particular blade needing specific data, we will usually fly the other two blades simply because we want a historical record of what’s going on with that particular tower. Our software allows our client



Thermal Cam USA uses cutting-edge software developed by ONDAKA. (Courtesy: Thermal Cam USA)

to access this information at any time. Knowledge like this is exponentially powerful.

► **The wind industry is constantly evolving. How is Thermal Cam USA evolving with it?**

We evolve by trying to embrace the most cutting-edge software. Thermal Cam USA, by aligning themselves with software companies, is essentially becoming beta-test partners with software and wind companies.

We started out with a drone and documenting anomalies using RGB. We realized we could do a much better job by providing an improved data set. That's what we have tried to do.

We are constantly brainstorming to bring new ideas to our clients. Perhaps we look at a blade thermally rather than optically to bring a better data set. Can we do a thermal test dynamically or statically? How can we as drone pilots collect that data more efficiently? As we scratch our heads over some

of these ideas, the wind energy people are saying OK, let's do it. The wind companies want to work with us.

► **Where do you see wind in the next 10 to 20 years, and where is Thermal Cam USA's place in that future?**

Thermal Cam USA is in the middle of the largest wind energy generation area in the U.S.

Wind energy is continuing to grow in Texas, and we will grow with it. I believe that in the next 10 to 20 years, wind will continue to lead the way in green energy. TCUSA will continue to work with wind companies and be on the cutting edge in drone inspections.

Wind has a successful network of people across the U.S. We're all learning from each other and, in my opinion, that's what makes this industry and its growth exciting. Thermal Cam USA is proud to be part of this industry. ✌

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