Interested In Becoming

An Air Traffic Controller?

Are you looking for an exciting, rewarding and challenging career in the aviation field?

If so, you should consider becoming an air traffic controller.

Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, controllers are on the job separating aircraft at over 350 locations across the country.
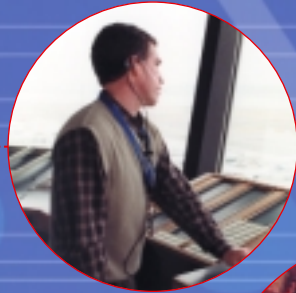
What Do Air Traffic Controllers Do?

Air traffic controllers work in three different types of facilities - tower, Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) and Air Route Traffic Control Center - in a rhythm similar to runners in a relay race.

Constantly on the move, a controller will work an aircraft until it reaches the end of his defined airspace – and then will hand it off to the next controller – similar to a runner handing the baton off after running his leg of the race.

Tower

Some controllers work in the glassed enclosed towers you see at airports. These controllers give pilots taxi and take off clearance. They will also work an aircraft until it approaches the edge of the tower's jurisdiction – then it is handed off to the controller in the TRACON.

Terminal Radar Approach Control

Controllers also work in radar rooms called TRACONs – which are located either at the base of the airport tower or in a building completely separate from the airport. These controllers provide service to the aircraft until it reaches the edge of the facility's airspace and then they hand it off to the center.

Air Route Traffic Control Center

Controllers in centers work at 20 facilities across the country, and will provide service to the aircraft for the majority of its journey. Using radar and manual procedures, these controllers track thousands of planes streaming across the sky at a time. A typical center is responsible for more than 100,000 square miles of airspace generally extending over a number of states.

How to Become an Air Traffic Controller

Minimum Requirements

Candidates must:

- Be 30 years of age or younger
- Be a United States citizen
- Become an employee of the Federal Aviation Administration
- Pass a rigid medical examination including but not limited to vision, hearing, substance abuse/dependency along with a background check

Schooling

Currently the Federal Aviation Administration is hiring candidates who have completed schooling at one of the following 14 locations* across the United States:

College of Aeronautic, Flushing N.Y.

Community College of Beaver County, Beaver Falls, Pa.

Daniel Webster College, Nashua, N.H.

Dowling College, Oakdale, N.Y.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona, Fla.

Hampton University, Hampton, Va.

Inter American University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Fla.

Middle Tennessee State University, Tenn.

Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, Calif.

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind.

University of Alaska Anchorage, Anchorage, Ala.

University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, N.D.

Minneapolis Community & Technical, Eden Prairie, Minn.

Check out www.natca.org for more information about each institution. Once hired by the Federal Aviation Administration, training begins, which can take someone three to five years to complete.

* This list is for informational purposes only. NATCA does not endorse, support or sponsor any particular institution or program.

Other "Must Know" Information

The union

In 1987, air traffic controllers founded the National Air Traffic Controllers Association. Ten years later, engineers and architects joined the union. Now NATCA represents over 19,000 employees in 18 aviation safety-related bargaining units. NATCA represents not only the interests of its members, but the safety of the flying public as well.

The locations

Air traffic controllers are placed in air traffic control facilities around the United States, Puerto Rico and Guam, based on their training.

The salary

The starting salary for a controller trainee is over $30,000 and increases with training, certifications and the level of the facility

The websites

If you are interested in becoming an air traffic controller, visit www.natca.org or www.faa.gov for more information.