Federal Aviation Administration

Air Traffic Control Specialist Employment Information

Job Series 2152

Terminal and En Route Positions

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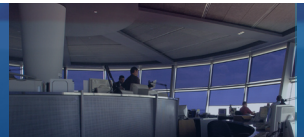

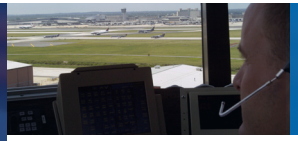

Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave. SW
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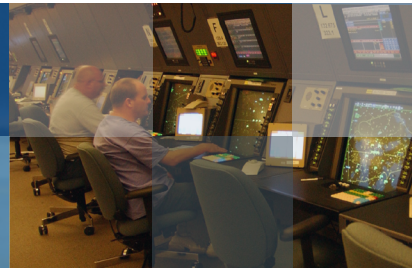
http://www.faa.gov/careers/employment/ATCS.htm



TC05-0015

Nature of the work

An air traffic control specialist (ATCS) guides aircraft to ensure a safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of air traffic. Controllers direct air traffic so it flows smoothly, efficiently and, above all, safely both on the ground and in the air. At FAA, controllers work in three specializations: terminal, en route, and flight service. This brochure discusses the terminal and en route options.

Terminal (Tower Controller)

Terminal controllers control air traffic at airports and give pilots taxiing and takeoff instructions, air traffic clearances, and advice based on their own observations and information from the National Weather Service, Air Route Traffic Control Centers (ARTCCs), flight service stations, pilots, and other sources. They provide safe separation of landing and departing aircraft. They transfer control of aircraft to other controllers when the aircraft leaves their airspace, and they receive control of aircraft coming into their airspace from controllers at adjacent facilities. Air traffic controllers must be familiar with the aircraft identification and positions of the aircraft under their control, aircraft types and speeds, and the location of navigational aids and landmarks in the area.

En Route (Center) Controller

Air traffic control specialists at FAA Air Route Traffic Control Centers give aircraft instructions, air traffic clearances, and advice regarding flight conditions while en route between airports. They provide separation between aircraft flying along the federal airways or operating into or out of airports not served by a terminal facility. Center controllers use radar, or in some cases, manual procedures to track the progress of all instrument flights within the center's airspace. Where radar coverage is available and their workload permits, en route controllers also provide radar service to pilots who are not on instrument flight plans, alerting them to potential traffic conflicts. Controllers transfer control of aircraft to controllers in other facilities, when the aircraft enters that facility's airspace.

Qualifications Requirements

Prior experience or training in air traffic control is not required. However, candidates must have three years of progressively responsible work experience, have completed a full 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree, or possess an equivalent combination of work experience and college credits. In combining education and experience, 1 year of undergraduate study (30 semester or 45 quarter hours) is equivalent to 9 months of general experience. Certain kinds of aviation experience may be substituted for these requirements.

U.S. citizenship is required.

Candidates must be under 31 years of age. In accordance with federal law, a maximum entry age of 30 has been established for these positions. Applicants may not have reached their 31st birthday prior to initial appointment.

Candidates must be able to speak English clearly enough to be understood over radios, intercoms, and similar communications equipment.

Candidates must also pass an entry-level employment examination for these positions.

Candidates who successfully pass the employment examination and are tentatively selected must also pass a rigorous medical examination that includes strict vision and hearing standards, pass a security/background investigation, and a pre-employment drug test.

Other Hiring Options

The FAA also hires graduates of FAA - approved post secondary educational programs, current or former federal employees with prior air traffic control specialist experience, former military controllers leaving the military, and retired military air traffic controllers for positions in the En Route Center or Terminal Options.

Testing

Applicants with no prior work experience in air traffic control must achieve a qualifying score on the authorized FAA pre-employment test. The test is administered by computer and takes about 8 hours to complete. To take the test, candidates must apply under an open advertisement for air traffic control positions and be chosen to take the examination. When there are many more applicants than available positions, applicants are selected to take the test through random selection.

Mandatory Separation

Individuals hired into these positions are covered by the special retirement program for air traffic controllers. By law, they are also subject to mandatory separation from these covered positions at age 56.