



**FAA Contract Tower Program:  
Enhancing Aviation Safety at Small Airports Around the Country**

The Federal Aviation Administration Contract Tower (FCT) Program enjoys strong bipartisan and bicameral support in Congress because of its long track record of enhancing aviation safety, providing critical air traffic control services, and creating significant cost savings for the FAA. Currently, 265 airports in 46 states participate in this successful program including 7 that participate in the cost share program.

The benefits of the FCT program have been validated repeatedly by the Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General (OIG). In its most recent [audit](#), released on April 28, 2020, the OIG concluded that "contract towers are more cost effective than comparable FAA towers and have similar safety records." The following describes some of the many benefits of the FCT Program:

- **Enhancing Aviation Safety:** For the past 40 years, this public-private-partnership has enhanced aviation safety at small airports around the country. Not surprisingly, the program consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users including pilots, airlines, fixed-base operators, flight schools, and corporate flight departments. Without this program, smaller airports would not have air traffic control towers that enhance aviation safety.
- **Efficient and Cost-Effective:** The FCT Program continues to be a cost-effective government industry partnership. According to FAA statistics for FY18, FCT towers handle approximately 29 percent of all U.S. tower operations, but account for just 10 percent of FAA's overall combined budget for contract towers and FAA-staffed towers and combined tower/TRACON facilities. The FCT Program also saves the FAA approximately \$200 million annually.
- **Connecting People in Small Communities:** The FCT Program continues to connect people who live in rural and less populated communities with the national air transportation system. Staffed air traffic control towers help airports attract commercial air service and general aviation users alike. Aviation-related activity, in turn, promotes economic development and supports jobs in local communities. FCT airports also play a key role when hurricanes and other natural disasters hit small communities.
- **Helping Military and Veterans:** The FCT Program provides significant support for military readiness, training, and national security operations. In fact, 47 percent of all military operations at civilian airports in the United States occur at FAA contract tower airports. Many FCT controllers are former FAA or military controllers. In addition, approximately 70 percent of all contract controllers are veterans.
- **Meeting High FAA Standards:** All federal contract controllers are certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and meet FAA training and operating standards. The FAA manages and oversees all aspects of the FCT Program, including operating procedures, staffing plans, certification, medical tests, security, and facility evaluations.

- ***One Unified Air Traffic Control System:*** Contract towers operate together with FAA-staffed facilities as part of one unified national air traffic control system. Without a federal program that provides necessary funding, sets safety and training standards, certifies operations, and monitors all aspects of contract tower facilities, air traffic control towers at many smaller airports around the country would be forced to close.

For information or question, please contact Brad Van Dam of AAAE and USCTA at 202-365-3472 or [brad.vandam@aaae.org](mailto:brad.vandam@aaae.org)