

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER TOUR

This session helps Explorers understand how air traffic control operates.

CATEGORY

- Higher-order Thinking
- Social Skills
- Communication

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the kinds of decisions air traffic controllers make (i.e., when to hold an aircraft, when to clear an aircraft for landing, what headings to give a pilot, etc.).
- Describe the career path needed to become an air traffic controller.

SUPPLIES

- None

PREPARATION

Consider having one of your post or club officers coordinate the following plans for this trip.

Contact an airport that uses air traffic controllers and explain that you have a group of Aviation Explorers who have an interest in seeing how air traffic control operates. (Note that while a local airport may be more convenient, a larger airport some distance away may offer more to see and experience.) Confirm a day and time for your field trip.

Determine which of your Explorers will attend the tour and how many chaperones are needed, then arrange for transportation. There may be a limit on the number of people allowed on the tour. If you have more Explorers and chaperones interested than can be accommodated, you may need to reduce the size of your group. You may choose to decide based on attendance or whether a participant has never been to a tower before.

Submit a [tour and activity plan](#) to your local Learning for Life office at least one month prior to the activity, and be sure Explorers have submitted signed waivers for the field trip.

Have your Explorers create a list of questions to ask the air traffic controllers, including the education necessary for the position.

ADVISOR NOTE: Text in italics should be read aloud to participants. As you engage your post in activities each week, please include comments, discussions, and feedback to the group relating to **Character, Leadership, and Ethics**. These are important attributes that make a difference in the success of youth in the workplace and in life.

ACTIVITY

Tower Tour Orientation

Before entering the tower with the Explorers, lead a discussion about their understanding of the operations that take place within. Consider asking these questions to get them thinking:

- *How tall do you think this tower is?* Elaborate on why traffic control towers are specific heights.
- *What hours of the day and week do you think this tower is open?* Discuss why the hours are what they are for this particular tower, and why other towers may have different operating hours.
- *Does every airport in the country have a traffic control tower? Every airport in the world?* Describe a scenario (in and out of the country) in which an airport would **not** have a tower.
- *Who is allowed in the tower? Who is not allowed?* Elaborate on the security measures in place that allow certain people to enter the tower and prohibit others.

Tower Tour

Emphasize to the Explorers that they must be respectful of the controllers while touring the facility. As an Advisor, you need to make sure they are quiet and do not touch anything because their actions may affect the pilots in the area.

At an appropriate time, let Explorers ask questions.

ADVISOR NOTE

Some sample questions are below. They are designed to help the participants apply what they have learned to their own interests. You are welcome to use these questions or develop your own questions that relate to your post or specific focus area.

REFLECTION

Focusing Questions

- *What is one new thing you learned during today's discussion?*

Analysis Questions

- *Based on what you saw and heard today, describe what you would do in this situation: You have an aircraft on the runway that just landed. The pilot did not listen to your directions and missed his turnoff. You have another aircraft on final passing over the numbers and a third aircraft entering the pattern crosswind. The traffic is a little too close for comfort. Create a plan to execute quickly so that all involved have a safe flight.*
- *What kinds of skills or characteristics do you believe an air traffic controller needs to possess in order to be successful?*

Generalization Questions

- *What can you do now, during your time as a student, to prepare yourself for this or a similar career in the aviation field?*

RESOURCES

None