

# U.S. CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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## FIVE TOWERS ADDED TO CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM

Five visual flight rule (VFR) towers were recently added to FAA's Contract Tower Program, bringing to 162 the number of facilities participating.

Newly added towers are Salisbury-Wicomico (Md.), Gallatin Field/Bozeman (Mont.), Laughlin/Bullhead City (Ariz.), Alexandria (La.), and Waukesha County Airport (Wis.).

Following is the list of the 22 FAA-operated VFR towers scheduled for conversion during the current fiscal year:

Kenai Municipal (Alaska), Chico Municipal (Calif.), Redding Municipal (Calif.), San Diego Brown Field (Calif.), Grand Junction (Colo.), Danbury Municipal (Conn.), Opa Locka (Fla.), Melbourne (Fla.), Macon (Ga.), Keahole-Kona (Hawaii), Bloomington/Normal (Ill.), Missoula (Mont.), Lebanon Municipal (N.H.), Trenton (N.J.), Smith Reynolds (N.C.), Lawton Municipal (Okla.), Medford (Ore.), Capital City (Pa.), Lancaster (Pa.), Rio Grande Valley/Harlingen

(Texas), Felts Field (Wash.) and Renton (Wash.).

## COST-SHARING PROGRAM TO BE EFFECTIVE MAY 1

FAA officials, working in cooperation with AAAE/USCTA staff and the USCTA Policy Board, have established the framework for the contract tower cost-sharing program approved by Congress last year as part of the DOT/FAA appropriations bill for fiscal year 1999.

The program for the first time will permit contract towers that are below the 1.0 benefit/cost (b/c) ratio to share the tower's funding with FAA. Previously, if the b/c ratio for a contract tower fell below 1.0, FAA funding was terminated.

Of the 26 airports that were notified two years ago that their contract tower funding would be discontinued this year, only seven remain below the 1.0 benefit/cost ratio required for 100 percent federal-funded participation in the program. The seven towers include five current FAA contract towers—Salinas (Calif.), Olympia (Wash.), Central Nebraska-Grand Island, Alexandria Esler (La.) and Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach (S.C.)—and two FAA-operated towers scheduled to be converted to the contract program in fiscal year 1999—Capital City (Pa.) and

U.S. CONTRACT TOWER  
ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER

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THE U.S. CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER is published by the American Association of Airport Executives, the largest professional organization for airport executives in the world.

## GIVE US A CALL!

We're looking for feature news about your contract tower to publish in this newsletter. Do you have anecdotal information about safety or economic development issues relating to your contract tower, or stories about individual air traffic controllers at your airport? Please contact Barbara Cook at (703) 824-0500, Ext. 133, or e-mail [barbara.cook@airportnet.org](mailto:barbara.cook@airportnet.org).

Felts Field (Wash.)

FAA has sent letters to each of the five current contract towers, providing information on their b/c ratio and specifying what the airport's share of the tower's operating costs will be during the period May 1-Sept. 30 1999. This number is based on the tower's specific b/c ratio. Further, FAA has asked each airport to respond within 30 days if it wishes to participate in the cost-sharing program, which begins May 1.

FAA has also determined that after the cost-sharing program is implemented for current FAA contract towers with a b/c ratio below 1.0, certain non-federal towers that have applied for the contract tower program will be notified that they may be invited to participate in the cost-sharing program as well.

Finally, FAA said that the b/c ratios for all FAA contract towers will be calculated and released in the fall of this year. AAAE/USCTA will work closely with FAA on these calculations.

## FAA COMPLETES STUDIES TO CLEAR USE OF CONTRACT TOWERS

In response to a March 2, 1998, ruling by Judge Ann Aldrich of the U.S. District Court for the Northern

District of Ohio, FAA has completed studies that officially conclude (1) VFR air traffic control is a commercial function, rather than an inherently governmental function, and (2) agency cost analyses of the contract tower program "clearly" show that a formal cost comparison is not required to substantiate the conversion of FAA towers to the contract tower program.

In determining that VFR air traffic control is a commercial function, FAA stated that relevant laws, regulations and agency orders "demonstrate that such activities do not require air traffic controllers to exercise the level and nature of discretion intrinsic to inherently government activities. As a result, VFR Air Traffic Control is a commercial activity, which private commercial sources outside the federal government may perform."

FAA noted that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) establishes federal policy regarding the performance of commercial activities in Circular No. A-76, which states that it is the policy of the federal government to achieve economy and enhance productivity. The circular directs agencies to accomplish that goal by comparing the cost of commercial performance and government performance for activi-

*The following letter from David Stremming, president of the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority, was written to FAA in support of the Contract Tower Program.*

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen at FAA:

Since I may not have had the opportunity of meeting you personally, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am David Stremming, president of the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority, which is the governing body that is responsible for the operation of both Forbes Field and Philip Billard Airports. I was recently reading that a number of FAA contract towers are either coming up for renewal or rebidding, and for that reason I would like to take a moment of your time to express our sincere appreciation for the outstanding job that Midwest Air Traffic Control Service has provided to the FAA, the MTAA, and the airport users of both Forbes Field and Philip Billard Airports.

I have personally had the pleasure of working with Midwest Air Traffic Control Service for almost ten years now at Billard Airport, and for approximately

two years at Forbes Field Airport, once the Forbes Field control tower was converted from an FAA control tower to a contract tower. I must tell you that we have been extremely pleased with the quality of service and the professionalism we have received from both management, and, especially, the controllers in the cab. Their dedication to the FAA, the MTAA, and the day-to-day airport users has been outstanding and very consistent. Over the years, I have had hundreds of opportunities to work with management and local staff of Midwest Air Traffic Control Service, and I must tell you they have always been professional, understanding, and always open-minded to change and minor constructive criticism.

I know that you have an awesome responsibility ahead of you in determining which companies will be awarded contracts for different cities and regions, and I would only hope that this letter, in some small way, will assist you in your final deliberation. I would hope that if you have any questions, you will not hesitate to contact me at your convenience. Once again, sincere thanks for the tremendous support we have always received from the FAA, and for this opportunity to serve you.

ties that are not inherently governmental and then to rely on commercial sources when the products or services are less expensive through that means. Further, the circular describes an inherently government function as those that normally fall into two categories: the act of governing, such as management and direction of the armed forces, selection of program priorities and the regulation of industry and commerce; and monetary transactions and entitlements, such as tax collection and revenue disbursements.

While pointing out that all air traffic control positions "require a significantly high level of mental and physical abilities," FAA nevertheless ruled that, "The activities performed by any air traffic controller, whether contractor or government employee, at a comparable airport tower, will be the same, and will be guided by the same regulations and policy directives." Nowhere does the execution of these functions rely on the controller being a government employee "or possessing governance skills, such that his or her actions would commit the government to one course of action over another, a basic prerequisite to finding such a function to be inherently governmental," FAA found.

FAA also underscored that, "The discretionary functions related to air traffic control belong to the FAA administrator. VFR air traffic control is one of her operational tools in achieving the policy goals of safe, navigable airspace." Additionally, FAA said, "the agency maintains more than 150 VFR towers that direct hundreds of flights per day. However, if relinquished to a commercial source, the FAA could establish control over VFR flights by appropriate inspection and certification of all VFR controllers and sites."

In the second analysis that found the contract tower program qualifies for a waiver from A-76 formal cost comparisons, FAA relied on two provisions in the circular.

The first provision for a waiver states that the conversion of a federal program to a commercial one must result in a significant financial or service quality improvement.

FAA pointed to historical cost data showing that the contractors' operating costs of Level I towers "are consistently significantly lower than those of the FAA." The cost comparison for the 109 towers in the federal contract program at the time shows an estimated savings of \$33 million annually. Further, the cost comparison for the 22 towers scheduled to be included in the contract tower program in fiscal year 1998 shows potential cost savings of another

\$6 million annually.

Further, FAA said, evaluations of towers in the contract program show that contractor-provided ATC services "have consistently earned evaluation scores comparable to those for corresponding type FAA-staffed towers. Feedback from users and performance indicators monitored through evaluations indicate that the service level remains high at FCT locations. We have not experienced and do not anticipate any reduction in quality of ATC services at FCTs."

The second provision to qualify for a waiver requires the agency to show that there is no reasonable expectation that the in-house organization could successfully win a bid competition against the private sector to operate the tower.

FAA pointed to the projected savings of \$33 million annually from use of private contractors for the Level I VFR towers and noted, "Such a large differential precludes any possibility of the government winning a cost competition with the private sector for providing ATC services at low activity ATCTs."

## GARVEY NOTES FAA TRYING TO RESOLVE TARDIS ISSUES

FAA Administrator Jane Garvey, in response to a request from AAAE/USCTA for the agency to adopt a national policy on the installation of Terminal Automated Radar Display and Information System (TARDIS) at VFR air traffic control towers, said FAA currently is attempting to resolve issues regarding TARDIS deployment.

The program is on hold with seven installations across the country and some 10 additional sites in the planning stages. AAAE/USCTA told Garvey that the demand for TARDIS is likely to grow, adding that airports want FAA's Air Traffic and Airways Facilities ranches to resolve any differences concerning the system's installation.

In her response, Garvey noted that while TARDIS is being used in some low-activity VFR towers as an aid to controllers in visually locating aircraft, the sys-

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USCTA members should send in their 1999 membership renewals as soon as possible. Call Spencer Dickerson at (703) 824-0500, Ext. 130 with any questions.

tem is not certified for provision of radar services. "Since TARDIS interfaces with terminal and en route surveillance systems, security of surveillance and flight information, questions surrounding the integrity of the interface have arisen." Garvey pledged that FAA is making every effort to resolve these issues "and provide the air traffic control work force the tools needed to provide safe and efficient services."

**CONTRACT TOWER PROGRAM BENEFITS DESCRIBED AT HEARING**

Tim Rogers, A.A.E., a member of the USCTA Policy Board and chairman of AAAE's Non-Hub/General Aviation Committee, testified on behalf of the two or-

ganizations at a recent House aviation subcommittee hearing on funding and infrastructure issues at small and medium sized airports.

Rogers outlined the background of FAA's Contract Tower Program, noting that it has enhanced safety and provided cost savings to the federal government. He expressed appreciation to subcommittee Chairman John Duncan (R-Tenn.) for his support last year of the contract tower cost-sharing program and urged him to include authorization language continuing this innovative program in the multi-year FAA reauthorization bill now being debated in Congress.

Rogers told the congressmen that DOT's Inspector General last year determined that contract towers pro-  
*(continued on page 7)*

**FOLLOWING IS THE CURRENT LIST OF  
FAA CONTRACT TOWERS  
(AS OF MARCH 1999)**

<b>AIRPORTNAME</b>	<b>FAA REGION</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>AIRPORTNAME</b>	<b>FAA REGION</b>	<b>STATE</b>
Bethel	AAL	AK	Decatur	AGL	IL
King Salmon	AAL	AK	Meigs Field (Chicago)	AGL	IL
Kodiak	AAL	AK	St. Louis Regional	AGL	IL
Dubuque Iowa	ACE	IA	So. Illinois/Carbondale	AGL	IL
Forbes Field	ACE	KS	Waukegan Regional	AGL	IL
Hutchinson Mun.	ACE	KS	Williamson County	AGL	IL
Johnson Co. Exec.	ACE	KS	Gary Regional	AGL	IN
Philip Billard Mun.	ACE	KS	Battle Creek	AGL	MI
Salina Municipal	ACE	KS	Detroit City	AGL	MI
Columbia	ACE	MO	Jackson	AGL	MI
Joplin Regional	ACE	MO	Anoka (Minneapolis)	AGL	MN
Rosecrans Mem'l/St. Joseph	ACE	MO	Minot	AGL	ND
Central Neb./Grand Island	ACE	NE	Burke Lakefront	AGL	OH
Martin State	AEA	MD	Ohio State University	AGL	OH
Washington Co. Reg'l/Hagerstown	AEA	MD	Cincinnati Mun./Lunken	AGL	OH
Salisbury-Wicomico	AEA	MD	Cuyahoga County	AGL	OH
Ithaca	AEA	NY	Rapid City Regional	AGL	SD
Niagara Falls	AEA	NY	Appleton	AGL	WI
Oneida County	AEA	NY	Central Wisconsin	AGL	WI
Stewart	AEA	NY	Kenosha Municipal	AGL	WI
Williamsport/Lycoming Co.	AEA	PA	Lacrosse	AGL	WI
Charlottesville-Albemarle	AEA	VA	Rock County	AGL	WI
Lynchburg	AEA	VA	Timmerman (Milwaukee)	AGL	WI
Greenbrier Valley	AEA	WV	Waukesha County Airport	AGL	WI
Morgantown	AEA	WV	Wittman Regional	AGL	WI
Parkersburg	AEA	WV	Bridgeport	ANE	CT
Wheeling Ohio Co.	AEA	WV	Groton-New London	ANE	CT
			Hartford-Brainard	ANE	CT
			Tweed-New Haven	ANE	CT

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE	AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Barnes Municipal	ANE	MA	Kingston	ASO	NC
Beverly	ANE	MA	Isla Grande	ASO	Puerto Rico
Hyannis	ANE	MA	Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach	ASO	SC
Lawrence	ANE	MA	Greenville Downtown	ASO	SC
Martha's Vineyard	ANE	MA	Smyrna	ASO	TN
New Bedford	ANE	MA	Jackson	ASO	TN
Norwood	ANE	MA	Alexander Hamilton (St. Croix)	ASO	Virgin Islands
Worcester	ANE	MA			
Boire Field/Nashua	ANE	NH			
Eagle County	ANM	CO	Fayetteville	ASW	AR
Friedman Memorial	ANM	ID	Texarkana Mun./Webb Field	ASW	AR
Idaho Falls	ANM	ID	Acadiana Regional	ASW	LA
Lewiston-Nez Perce Co.	ANM	ID	Esler Regional Reg'l	ASW	LA
Pocatello Municipal	ANM	ID	Houma	ASW	LA
Gallatin Field/Bozeman	ANM	MT	Alexandria	ASW	LA
Klamath Falls	ANM	OR	Farmington Municipal	ASW	NM
McNary Field	ANM	OR	Lea County/Hobbs	ASW	NM
Pendleton Municipal	ANM	OR	Santa Fe Co. Mun.	ASW	NM
Redmond	ANM	OR	Ardmore Municipal	ASW	OK
Troutdale (Portland)	ANM	OR	Enid Woodring Mun.	ASW	OK
Ogden-Hinckley Mun.	ANM	UT	Univ. of Oklahoma/Westheimer	ASW	OK
Bellingham Int'l	ANM	WA	Wiley Post	ASW	OK
Olympia	ANM	WA	Brownsville Int'l	ASW	TX
Tacoma Narrows	ANM	WA	Easterwood	ASW	TX
Walla Walla Regional	ANM	WA	Grand Prairie	ASW	TX
Yakima	ANM	WA	Laredo International	ASW	TX
Cheyenne	ANM	WY	McAllen	ASW	TX
			McKinney Municipal	ASW	TX
			Redbird	ASW	TX
			San Angelo	ASW	TX
Dothan	ASO	AL	Stinson Municipal (San Antonio)	ASW	TX
Brookley (Mobile)	ASO	AL	Tyler	ASW	TX
Tuscaloosa Municipal	ASO	AL			
Athens Municipal	ASO	GA	Chandler	AWP	AZ
Fulton County	ASO	GA	Flagstaff Pulliam	AWP	AZ
Gwinnett County	ASO	GA	Glendale	AWP	AZ
McCullum	ASO	GA	Goodyear (Phoenix)	AWP	AZ
SW Georgia/Albany-Dougherty	ASO	GA	Laughlin/Bullhead City	AWP	AZ
Valdosta Municipal	ASO	GA	Mesa/Williams Gateway	AWP	AZ
Albert Whitted	ASO	FL	Ryan	AWP	AZ
Gainesville	ASO	FL	Fullerton	AWP	CA
Hollywood	ASO	FL	Hawthorne	AWP	CA
Jacksonville/Craig	ASO	FL	Lake Tahoe	AWP	CA
Key West	ASO	FL	Modesto	AWP	CA
Kissimmee	ASO	FL	Oxnard	AWP	CA
Lakeland Municipal	ASO	FL	Palmdale	AWP	CA
Naples	ASO	FL	Riverside	AWP	CA
Page Field	ASO	FL	Sacramento Executive	AWP	CA
Panama City/Bay Co.	ASO	FL	Salinas Municipal	AWP	CA
Pompano Beach	ASO	FL	San Carlos	AWP	CA
Stuart/Whitham	ASO	FL	San Louis Obispo	AWP	CA
Titusville/Cocoa	ASO	FL	Santa Maria	AWP	CA
Barkley Regional	ASO	KY	Whiteman	AWP	CA
Owensboro/Daviess Co.	ASO	KY	William J. Fox	AWP	CA
Greenville Municipal	ASO	MS	Agana	AWP	Guam
Hawkins Field	ASO	MS	Lihue	AWP	HI
Meridian/Key Field	ASO	MS	Molokai	AWP	HI
			Elko	AWP	NV

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*(Continued from page 5 at top)*

vide a high quality of service comparable to FAA-operated towers and are staffed by controllers who meet the agency's training requirements. "The IG report reaffirms our position that the contract tower program is cost-effective and provides safe, high-quality air traffic control services that enhance aviation safety overall," Rogers said.

The seven members of the House aviation subcommittee who attended the hearing, which was held in Wichita, Kan., posed numerous questions about the needs of small airports and pledged to consider their concerns during this year's debate over FAA reauthorization legislation. They also inquired about specifics of the contract tower program, especially the aspects of the program that result in ATC financial savings to the federal government.

In addition to Duncan, the subcommittee members who attended the hearing were Reps. Asa Hutchinson (R-Ark.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Edward Pease (R-Ind.), Leonard Boswell (D-Iowa), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Todd Tiahrt (R-Kan.).

## SIX MORE AIRPORTS JOIN CONTRACT TOWER ASSOCIATION

Six airports recently joined the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA), as well as Unitech, a provider of air traffic control services.

New airport members are: Quincy (Ill.) Municipal Airport, Craig (Fla.) Airport, Southern Illinois Airport, Hagerstown (Md.) Regional Airport, Worcester (Mass.) Regional Airport and the Sacramento (Calif.) County Department of Airports.

USCTA receives oversight from a Policy Board comprised of Bryan Elliott, A.A.E., executive director of the Charlottesville, Va., Albemarle Airport Authority, as Chairman, and James Hansford, A.A.E., airport manager of the Central Wisconsin Airport, as Vice Chairman.

Other USCTA policy board members are: Jack Schelter, A.A.E., deputy director of aviation at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport; Tim Rogers, A.A.E., executive director of Salina, Kan., Airport Authority; Ted Soliday, A.A.E., executive director of the Naples, Fla., Airport Authority; Rick Baird, manager of Friedman Memorial Airport in Hailey, Idaho; Steve Stockam, manager of Joplin, Mo., Regional Airport; Ron Craft, airport division director of the Jef-

erson City, Mo., Municipal Airport; Roger Engstrom, A.A.E., director of Mobile, Ala. Airport Authority; Glenn Januska, A.A.E., manager of Waukesha, Wisc., County Airport; Shane Cordes, director of marketing and contracts at Midwest ATC; Jim Chappell, manager of Salinas, Calif., Municipal Airport; Jim McCue, A.A.E., manager of Glendale, Calif., Municipal Airport; Richard Howell, A.A.E., director of S.W. Georgia Regional Airport in Albany, Ga., and Jon Mathaisen, A.A.E., director of Rio Grande Valley International Airport in Harlingen, Texas.

Spencer Dickerson, executive vice president of AAE, serves as executive director of the USCTA. Consultants to the association are Linda Hall Daschle and Bert Randall of Baker, Donelson; Patrick McCann of the Wexler, Group and Larry Barnett of AB Management Associates.

The following are the members of the association: state of Alaska; Mobile Downtown Airport (Ala.), City of Phoenix Aviation Department (Ariz.), Mesa/Williams Gateway (Ariz.), Glendale Municipal Airport (Ariz.), Flagstaff (Ariz.) Pulliam Airport, Sacramento (Calif.) County Department of Airports, San Carlos Airport (Calif.), San Luis Obispo County Airport (Calif.), Modesto City-County Airport (Calif.), Los Angeles County Aviation Division (Calif.), Ramona Airport-County of San Diego (Calif.), Salinas (Calif.) Municipal Airport, Eagle County (Colo.) Regional, Boca Raton Airport (Fla.), Craig (Fla.) Airport, Kissimmee (Fla.), Martin County Airport (Fla.), Naples Municipal Airport (Fla.), Titusville-Cocoa Airport (Fla.), Page Field (Fla.), Lakeland (Fla.) Linder Regional Airport, Vandenberg Airport (Fla.), Southwest Georgia Regional Airport, Glynco Jetport (Ga.), Friedman Memorial Airport (Idaho), Pocatello (Idaho) Regional Airport, Waukegan Regional Airport (Ill.), Meigs Field (Ill.), Quincy (Ill.) Municipal Airport, Southern Illinois Airport, St. Louis Regional Airport (Ill.), Williamson County Regional Airport (Ill.), Columbus (Ind.), Municipal Airport, Johnson County Municipal Airport (Kan.), Salina Municipal Airport (Kan.), Manhattan (Kan.) Regional Airport, Bowling Green (Ky.), Barkley Regional Airport (Ky.), Hagerstown (Md.) Regional Airport, Martin State Airport (Md.), Westfield Barnes Airport (Mass.), Worcester (Mass.) Regional Airport, Joplin Regional Airport (Mo.), Jefferson City Memorial Airport (Mo.), Cape Girardeau Regional (Mo.), Gallatin Field (Mont.), Missoula (Mont.), Central Nebraska Regional Airport; Henderson (Nev.) Executive Airport, Kinston Regional Jetport

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Airports and companies interested in joining the organization should contact Spencer Dickerson of AAEA at (703) 824-0500, Ext. 130.

## GREENVILLE CONTRACT TOWER WINS FAA AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

FAA has presented the ATT Award of Excellence to the Greenville (S.C.) Downtown Airport contract control tower.

To be eligible for the award, the tower, operated by RVA, Inc., had to receive an index rating of 90 or above and have a "commendable writeup" in every category of the evaluation. According to RVA, the results of the Greenville full facility evaluation included an overall Conformity Index of 98.1 with two commendables in operations and one commendable each in the other three categories.

RVA also said that the FAA evaluators stated, "It was readily apparent that the GMU workforce respected one another and possessed a genuine, mutual concern for their personal and professional welfare." It was further stated by the evaluators that they observed "a level of teamwork that enhanced the quality of service provided to their users."