

WHAT IS REQUIRED

The air transport industry is of the firm conviction that the best overall method for collision prevention is a highly efficient and reliable air traffic control (ATC) system.

Safety, reliability, and efficiency are so interdependent that it is frequently difficult to identify any valid distinctions between them. An efficient system with a smooth flow of traffic, capable of comfortably handling traffic demands, is inherently a safe system. The greater its efficiency, the greater its capacity; and the greater its reliability, the greater is its safety. For this reason, we believe that the public interest will best be served by a vastly increased capability in the ATC system.

But to have such a system is not enough. That system must be used, and its users must be properly equipped and competent to participate.

In expanding the air traffic control system capability, it is important to recognize that there are two basic forms of flying—VFR and IFR. Although the airlines see the need for considerably more positive control by ATC, they also recognize that there are some areas wherein VFR flying can be accommodated safely without the full rigor of IFR control. Nevertheless, a higher level of safety for both VFR and IFR traffic can be achieved by requiring more aircraft effectively to participate in the air traffic control system. Accordingly, our recommendations, which follow, include those services and facilities which are concerned with VFR traffic as well as IFR traffic.

These recommendations include provisions for—

- (a) Vastly improved ATC capability.
- (b) Greater participation in the ATC system.
- (c) Improved aircraft and pilot capabilities.

VASTLY IMPROVED ATC CAPABILITY

Control towers: One of the facilities serving both VFR and IFR traffic is the airport control tower. Of the 526 airports served by the scheduled airlines only 234 have control towers. (See fig. 4.)

Present FAA planning standards require that an airport generate 24,000 itinerant aircraft operations per year before it can qualify for a control tower. These standards give no consideration to total traffic volume nor do they attach any special significance to the fact that the airport might have scheduled airline service.

The number of aircraft operations is increasing steeply. More and more aircraft—both airline and general aviation—are high-performance jets and turboprops, which makes it more difficult for pilots to rely solely on the “see and avoid” principle for traffic separation.

It is clear that with increasing numbers of general aviation and airline jets, even the smaller airports are beginning to face the same congestion problems as did the larger airports a few years back. Lack of a control tower at airports served by the airlines can no longer be set aside as a negligible lack. The airlines hold that scheduled passenger service, in itself, is enough to qualify an airport for a control tower.

The airlines therefore recommend that FAA provide a control tower at every airport having scheduled airline passenger service.