

Dan D'Ambrosio
Houston Center (ZHU)

When were you hired?

I was hired in May 2006.

Are you a CPC? How long did it take you to reach this level?

Yes, I am a Certified Professional Controller. It took me 2 years and 8 months.

What was your training experience like?

Training was difficult most of the time. There was a lot of studying and trying to understand things that don't make any sense, unless you are working live traffic. Functional training made it extremely difficult. It was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle, but they would only give certain pieces at a time. Once you got another piece you would realize that the pieces you put together might be wrong.

What area do you work in at your facility?

I work the New Orleans Specialty. It consists of airspace from Lafayette LA, to Pensacola, FL. encompasses LFT, BTR, MSY, GPT, MOB approach airspace's. It also extends for approx. 200 miles offshore south from New Orleans.

What did you do before coming to work for the FAA?

Before I was hired at the FAA I attended CTI at Miami Dade College. I also have almost ten years experience working for 3 different airlines, mostly as a dispatcher.

Why did you choose to become an air traffic controller?

My father was a PATCO controller that was fired in 1981. Before he was fired he used to take me up in the tower at Miami International. Ever since then I always wanted to be an air traffic controller.

In your opinion, how important is NATCA in the world of ATC?

NATCA has been monumental to me as a controller. Many times here on the job there has been a gross breach of safety implemented by the FAA. NATCA is the watch dog that keeps the flying public safe. NATCA gives me the ability to speak out against these negligent practices, while protecting me from any repercussions or punitive action that someone may want to take against me.

Why have you gotten involved with NATCA?

I got involved in NATCA simply because the FAA gave me the feeling I was not wanted. NATCA on the other hand, fought for the issues most important to me, i.e. Per Diem, leave, work rules, etc. I didn't want new hires going through what I had to endure at the Academy, and thanks to NATCA most of them will not.

While being a NATCA activist, I've been lucky enough to see great things and places. For the NATCA in Washington event, I traveled to Washington D.C., met with all of my Congressmen, and learned how Washington really worked. I've also had the opportunity to travel to Oklahoma City and speak to the ATC students at the FAA Academy. I love being able to do new things and I know my experiences as a NATCA activist won't end there.

Do you have any advice or words of wisdom for new controllers?

Do not take the job for granted. You have to study and work hard! But the rewards are worth it. Like many of my brothers and sisters say, "work hard, play hard".

What is an average day at work like for you?

I love the people I work with, dislike who I work for. Everyday is something different, some days are slow, and some days never end. You definitely can't say it's boring.