



Turn Off Tune In: Glass City Controllers Shatter the Habit (6/25/2015)

If you're interested in seeing some of the finest glass artwork in the world, Toledo, Ohio, is the place to go. Air traffic controllers in the "glass capital" will help you get there and back safely.

Toledo Tower and TRACON (TOL) staff has ramped up the integration of the joint NATCA-FAA Turn Off Tune In campaign to strengthen their robust safety culture and reduce the effects of distractions in the workplace.

Front-line managers and NATCA's local officers are setting a strong example. Controllers support each other using a variety of resources and simple reminders, which are making a difference in improving professionalism.



Controller Jeff Hormann turns off and tunes in at a charging station. Photo courtesy of ATO.

For example, NATCA FacRep Micah Maziar led the development of Turn Off Tune In cards for the lanyards that controllers wear around their necks.

"Cellphone usage is a habit," said Air Traffic Manager Kristianne Lore. "If your cellphone is on you and you receive notification of a new message, the impulse is to look at your phone. So people generally aren't even consciously aware that they are doing it. By increasing awareness of the habit, we are hoping to break that chain of behavior."

Toledo's local safety council (LSC), composed of controllers and managers, has furthered the facility's awareness about the hazards of workplace distractions. By promoting a non-punitive, peer-to-peer monitoring in the operating quarters, the LSC provides an avenue for open discussions about distractions. It serves as a forum to educate and discuss how to mentor others.

Toledo staff also recently installed several phone-charging stations throughout the facility. NATCA and local management collaboratively decided to install the stations in conspicuous places—such as next to the tower stairwell and just outside of the TRACON—so that controllers can't miss them on their way to the operating quarters.

"It will encourage people to use them because they'll see other people are using them," Maziar said. "We want our controllers to lead by example."

The installation of the charging stations was a collaborative effort that involved many groups and individuals at the facility. The Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority installed electrical outlets and Brian Stump, a Technical Operations employee, fabricated the mounting brackets.

"If it wasn't for the efforts of the Toledo Express Port Authority and TOL Tech Ops employees, especially Brian Stump, the charging stations would still be in a box in my office," said Lore. "This was a facility-wide collaborative effort that only further demonstrates the true power of everyone working together towards a positive safety culture."



Toledo's charging station provides a convenient way to eliminate distractions. Photo courtesy of the ATO.

With NATCA and management working together to eliminate distractions from TOL, the safety of operations can only improve. "I have high hopes that with the charging stations installed and with the extra time and energy that has been invested that we'll be able to take care of issues we may have had in the past," Maziar said, "and prevent any issues in the future."

This story has been published jointly by the FAA and NATCA.