



Sky-high careers: Jobs related to airlines

by Tamara Dillon

Would you like to tour the world? Meet people on the go and keep them safe? Fix some of the world's largest and most complex machinery? If any of these scenarios sound exciting, a career in air travel might be for you.

Air transportation is surging, which in turn should lead to an expansion of the industry. In 2006, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a record 741 million passengers traveled by airplane—and FAA forecasts show that that number could reach 1 billion by 2015.

Tamara Dillon is an economist in the Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, BLS, (202) 691-5733.

This increase in passengers should lead to lots of jobs for the people who ensure that air travelers arrive safely at their destinations. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects an increase in wage and salary jobs over the 2004-14 decade. And most of these air-travel jobs come with an adventurous perk: the chance to fly for free or at substantially reduced rates.

But a career in the skies begins with solid training on the ground. Among other abilities, workers in air travel need technical skills, clear thinking, and the maturity to deal well with the unexpected.

Get started now by reading about occupations unique to air travel. Learn about the duties, earnings, training, and ups and downs of working in the air transportation industry. A few other occupations related to air travel are described in the box on page 10. And resources listed at the article's end can help you learn more.

Flight work

The business of air travel requires a variety of workers, from service-oriented ticket agents to business-savvy logistics managers. But when most people think of airline careers, they think of the workers in highly technical jobs that include airline pilots, air-traffic controllers, flight attendants, and mechanics.

Airline pilots and flight engineers

Pilots working as captains are in command of the aircraft and everyone on it. They supervise the work of the crew, give instructions, and make decisions aboard the plane. An airline pilot might oversee a twin-engine DC-3 on a 100-mile hop, a 4-engine Boeing 747 jet crossing the ocean, or a variety of aircraft in between.

Duties. Airline pilots plan each flight with the airline's flight dispatcher and meteorologist. Pilots brief the crew, check takeoff procedures, ascertain that the

plane is operating normally, fly the plane over the designated route, land the plane, and file a trip report at the final destination.

But there's much more involved in flying. Before the flight, pilots must check the latest safety notices to determine, for example, if volcanic activity along the flight path might affect routing. They plan alternative routes and safety procedures. They also check to make sure that the necessary paperwork is aboard. The copilot usually carries out a visual inspection of the aircraft to ensure that the fuel lines, tires, and engine turbine blades are all in good condition.

When the air traffic controller approves takeoff, the pilot gets ready to fly.

Takeoff, when engines are at maximum power, is one of the most critical stages of a flight. The aircraft of major airlines often weigh about 280 tons and have about 2 miles of runway to attain liftoff. During takeoff, the pilot releases the brakes and applies power to accelerate down the runway. When the aircraft reaches a certain speed, the pilot gently pulls the control column back to lift the plane off the ground.

Larger aircraft climb at an airspeed of about 370 miles per hour and rise at a rate averaging 1,500 feet per minute to reach their cruising altitude. The pilot switches on the weather radar and other systems to detect aircraft that might accidentally fly into the flight path.

During flight, pilots normally follow designated airways—highways in the sky—marked on flight maps. Most planes have a Global Positioning System onboard that helps the pilot to navigate.

When cruising on a flight path, airline aircraft are usually on autopilot, under the control of an onboard computer. The pilot manages the systems by reporting the plane's location to air traffic control, keeping an eye on all the engine instruments to ensure that they are within limits, and, if necessary, taking over control of the

aircraft from autopilot. On long-distance flights, most aircraft issue routine reminders to help the captain and copilot stay vigilant.

But the routine of autopilot is never completely routine. Pilots watch for turbulence on the weather radar screen inside the cockpit and attempt to avoid it. They monitor conditions during the flight and prepare for emergency diversion, if needed. And they plan safe alternative routes—ones that avoid mountainous terrain, for example—in case an unplanned descent becomes necessary.

When the plane nears its destination, the pilot checks the weather and other conditions. Unfavorable conditions might require a diversion.

Landing is the most critical phase of a flight, and it can be tricky. During the manual landing for large aircraft, the flight crew start to slow down with several quick actions: pulling back on the throttles; raising another set of controls, known as the spoilers, to disrupt

airflow over the wings; and reversing the thrust of the engines while applying the brakes. During autopilot landings, all landing actions are automatic except for selecting reverse thrust and taxiing to the parking bay.

Passengers appreciate a smooth landing. Pilots try to oblige by gradually slowing the plane using their skill and experience in operating the controls. But even on autopilot landings, pilots make choices. If the runway is wet, for example, pilots may opt to hit the brakes as soon as possible, choosing a jerky stop over the risk of overshooting the runway.

Most airline pilots start their careers as copilots with regional carriers. When they join major airlines, their first positions may be as flight engineers. Flight engineers inspect the aircraft and oversee fueling operations before flight. During the flight, these engineers monitor engine performance, cabin pressurization, air conditioning, and other systems.

The position of flight engineer exists only on some



Pilots use their skill and experience to perform preflight checks and to operate aircraft during flights.

large jet planes. Smaller airliners, as well as the newer large aircraft, have only a 2-person flight crew that consists of the pilot and copilot.

Most pilots and flight engineers say they love their jobs. They like the thrill of flight and the science of mastering complex instruments. The opportunity to do respected work is another element that draws people to this career: Pilots have ultimate responsibility for the safety of passengers and crew.

Employment and earnings. Aircraft pilots and flight engineers held about 102,930 jobs in May 2006, according to BLS. Of those, about 75,810 worked as airline pilots, copilots, and flight engineers; the rest worked as commercial pilots. Other jobs include flight instructor and corporate, charter, test, or agricultural pilot.

Earnings of airline pilots and flight engineers are among the highest in the Nation and depend on factors such as the aircraft's type, size, and maximum speed and the pilot's number of hours and miles flown. According to BLS, salaries of aircraft pilots and flight engineers vary, depending on whether they work as airline or commercial pilots. Pay for flight engineers can be low, but earnings increase significantly as workers advance to copilot and pilot positions.

In May 2006, BLS data show that median annual salaries of airline pilots, copilots, and flight engineers were \$141,090. Median annual salaries of commercial pilots were \$57,480 in May 2006, according to BLS.

Qualifications and training. All pilots must have a high school diploma or equivalent. However, most airline pilots have a bachelor's degree. In fact, some colleges and universities offer FAA-approved flight training. These programs combine flight training with regular college coursework.

Pilots learn their flying skills in one of three ways: by attending a flight school approved by the FAA, taking private lessons from an FAA-licensed instructor, or training to fly in the military.

Initial training for pilots includes classes, simulator training, and actual flight with instructors. After students gain experience and flight time, they fly alone to practice specific skills. Next, to earn a private certificate, students must pass a written examination and a flight test with an FAA flight examiner.

Before pilots can earn pay for flying, they must have a commercial certificate and an instrument rating. To qualify for the commercial certificate, pilots need to

complete at least 250 hours of flight time and must pass another exam and flight test. In addition to the required instrument rating, most of these pilots have one or more advanced ratings—including those for multi-engine operation and aircraft type, depending on job requirements.

Most airline pilots also need significant paid flying experience. They gain flying experience either in the military or in other types of civilian piloting jobs, such as flying packages for a courier.

Pilots are tested throughout their careers, taking "check rides" twice a year. Check rides include a written and oral exam and flight tests given by an FAA instructor. Pilots are also expected to stay current on new techniques and procedures.

Aircraft pilots also must undergo frequent physical examinations and meet medical standards, which vary by licenses. A Class I medical certificate requires the highest standards for vision, hearing, equilibrium, and general physical condition: Pilots must have an exceptional health history. Class II and Class III certificates have less rigid requirements but still demand a high degree of physical health.

All three classes of medical certificates allow the pilot to wear glasses, provided that the correction is within prescribed limits of vision. Drug addiction or alcoholism disqualifies any applicant.

Air traffic controllers

Air traffic controllers decide when and where a plane can fly. They must be as prepared as possible, but, because they never fully know what will happen with the planes, they also must be flexible. If you are organized, adaptable, and can make decisions rapidly under pressure, you might enjoy a career in air traffic control.

Duties. Air traffic controllers work at airports, Air Route Traffic Control Centers, or Flight Service Stations. In each location, these workers control flights within their airspace, transferring to another controller the flights that leave their space and receiving from other controllers the flights that enter it.

Controllers at airports work in large towers, directing air traffic in the terminal area so it flows smoothly and efficiently. Tower controllers typically begin the workday by talking to a flight service specialist about weather conditions and flight plans. The tower controller opens the tower, checks equipment, and reviews the day's flight plans on the computer.

Tower controllers give pilots taxiing and takeoff instructions, air traffic clearances, and advice. They base these communications on their own observations and information they receive from the National Weather Service, route traffic control centers, flight service stations, and aircraft pilots.

To keep landing and departing aircraft separate, tower controllers must be able to quickly recall registration numbers of aircraft under their control, the aircraft types and speeds, positions in the air, and the locations of navigational aids or landmarks in the area.

Controllers working in route traffic control centers give aircraft instructions, air traffic clearances, and advice regarding conditions during flight. They provide for separation between aircraft flying along Federal airways or operating into or out of airports not served by a terminal facility.

Control center controllers use computer equipment, radio, radar, telephones, and other electronic and manual devices to track the progress of flights within the center's airspace. The use of radar equipment requires that they work in semi-darkness. And, unlike tower controllers, center controllers never actually see the aircraft that they control except as "targets" on the radar scope.

Controllers working in flight service stations provide preflight, in-flight, and emergency help to pilots who request it. They communicate information about both actual and forecast weather conditions, relay air traffic control instructions, assist pilots in emergencies, provide airport advisory service, and initiate and participate in searches for late or missing aircraft.

Directing the Nation's air traffic can be stressful, controllers say, but the pressure usually ends at the conclusion of their shift. To minimize the stress associated with the job, requirements specify that controllers must work in their positions for no longer than 2 consecutive hours and must take breaks. And at the end of their shifts, controllers are done; they rarely stay late or take work home with them.

Employment and earnings. There were about 23,240 air traffic controllers in May 2006, according to BLS. Nearly all of them were employed by the FAA—part of the Federal Government.

Air traffic controllers are among the highest paid occupations in the United States. According to BLS, median annual salaries of air traffic controllers in May 2006 were \$117,240.

Qualifications and training. Applicants for air traffic controller positions must be no older than age 30 and must not have reached their 31st birthday at the time of appointment. They must be U.S. citizens and able to speak English clearly enough to be understood over radios, intercoms, and similar communications equipment.

According to the FAA, air traffic controllers must demonstrate potential for learning and performing this type of work. They show this potential either by having gained work experience in technical positions, by earning a bachelor's degree to substitute for the experience



Some air traffic controllers see the aircraft that they direct only as "targets" on a radar scope.

requirement, or by having a combination of work experience and college credits, with 1 year of undergraduate study equaling 9 months of general experience. Certain kinds of aviation experience may be substituted for these requirements.

The FAA also hires graduates of FAA-approved postsecondary educational programs, current or former Federal employees with prior air traffic control experience, and former or retired military controllers.

Applicants to air traffic controller positions must also pass an entry-level employment examination. Candidates who successfully pass the employment exam and are tentatively selected must also pass a medical exam that includes vision and hearing tests, a security and background investigation, and a pre-employment drug test.

Applicants who have no prior work experience in air traffic control must achieve a qualifying score on an FAA-authorized test. This test is administered by computer and takes about 8 hours to complete. Candidates must first apply for an opening and then be selected to take the test.

Flight attendants

Flight attendants are the face of the airlines. They constitute most of the contact between airlines and their customers, and they often are the basis for comparison between airlines. A flight attendant's role is to assist passengers and ensure their safety throughout the flight.

Duties. Flight attendants first assist passengers in boarding the plane: checking tickets, helping passengers stow their carry-on bags, and answering questions. They help to prepare the plane's cabin for departure by closing and locking the doors; checking the aisles, rows, and storage bins for loose items; and ensuring that all passengers are safely seated.

Flight attendants make announcements during flights using the in-cabin public address system. And depending on the length of the flight and the time of day, attendants are responsible for serving food and beverages and providing blankets or other amenities during the flight.

In addition to passenger comfort, passenger safety is an important part of the flight attendants' job. Flight attendants explain safety procedures and make sure that each passenger follows regulations, which they enforce as pleasantly as possible. During emergencies, such as evacuations, they also direct passengers in where to go and what to do.

Dealing with passengers often takes patience and finesse. Some passengers may become unruly over circumstances that may be out of the airlines' control, such

as delays on the runway due to bad weather. Flight attendants calm these passengers and try to remain professional even during the most challenging situations.

But flight attendants' work extends beyond passenger care. Along with the rest of the crew, attendants go to preflight briefings to learn from the pilot about weather conditions, special passenger needs, or other concerns related to the flight. Then, attendants check all emergency equipment, the public address system, and supplies of food, beverages, and other necessities.

When the plane lands, flight attendants assist passengers in deplaning. Some airlines also require attendants to tidy the cabin by performing tasks such as folding blankets, wiping down equipment, and straightening curtains or shades. Attendants also report in writing about anything noteworthy related to the flight, including minor medication given to passengers, articles lost or found, and equipment requiring attention.

Passenger assistance, though, remains one of the things that flight attendants say they like best about their work. Helping passengers, while sometimes challenging, is also rewarding: Attendants can lessen a traveler's distress or fear, making the flight more enjoyable for him or her. And flight attendants are often outgoing, so



Instruction in safety procedures is one of flight attendants' main duties.

they enjoy meeting travelers from across the country and around the world.

Employment and earnings. Flight attendants held about 96,760 jobs in May 2006. Most of them were with commercial airlines.

Median annual salaries of flight attendants were \$53,780 in May 2006, according to BLS. Flight attendant pay is based almost entirely on seniority and varies by airline, but attendants can increase their earnings by working additional hours and flights. With experience, flight attendants can become lead attendants and get more or preferred assignments, such as international flights.

Qualifications and training. The minimum age requirement for flight attendants is usually 19, but most airlines prefer attendants who are at least 21. Corrected vision, either with contact lenses or glasses, is acceptable for flight attendants. Most airlines also have rules relating to appearance, such as acceptable grooming practices, required uniforms, and maximum allowances for body weight that vary by height.

Flight attendants need good communication skills. Fluency or some level of competence in a foreign language may be required to work some international flights.

Applicants should also have some previous experience, especially in dealing with the public in a job that focuses on customer service. Experience that proves your independence and self-confidence is also helpful because during flights, attendants often make decisions independently. But experience need not be paid to be considered valuable. Applicants should also note meaningful volunteer work, such as assisting with a political campaign, school committee, or community service program.

Flight attendants must have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, but many airlines also require a minimum of 2 years in college or work experience in customer service. A bachelor's degree is helpful when competing for jobs and is often preferred—and may soon be required—by some airlines.

After they are hired, flight attendants have 3 to 8 weeks of training. This training covers all aspects of their future duties, including emergency evacuation procedures, first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and passenger psychology. New hires must also learn FAA

regulations, food and beverage service procedures, and methods for assisting certain passengers, such as unaccompanied minors. Trainees also get airline-specific instruction, including learning about its fleet of aircraft and other types of equipment, to prepare them to work on any type of plane.

At the end of this training, flight attendants become certified by passing an FAA emergency procedures test and an instructor-administered exam. Certified flight attendants usually report immediately to their assigned base of operations after graduation, sometimes working a flight the following day.

Mechanics and service technicians

Aviation maintenance departments comprise several different specialists, including airframe mechanics, powerplant technicians, instrument repairmen, and avionics technicians. As a team, these workers keep aircraft operating safely and efficiently.

Duties. Many mechanics specialize in preventive maintenance. They inspect aircraft engines, landing gear, instruments, pressurized sections, brakes, valves, pumps, air-conditioning systems, and other parts of the aircraft. They fix or replace any broken or worn parts that they find. When working on large, sophisticated planes, mechanics download diagnostic information from electronic boxes and consoles that monitor the aircraft's basic operations.

Mechanics and technicians conduct inspections, following a schedule that is based on the number of hours the aircraft has flown, calendar days since the last inspection, cycles of operation, or a combination of these factors.

Just like all mechanics, aircraft mechanics use wrenches, welding torches, digital calibration and diagnostic equipment, and other tools. But because planes are big, the work of an aircraft mechanic poses unique challenges. Mechanics examine engines through specially designed openings while standing on ladders or scaffolds or by using hoists or lifts to remove the entire engine from the craft.

Sometimes, mechanics need to take an engine apart. They use precision instruments to measure each part for wear and use x-ray and magnetic inspection equipment to check for tiny cracks. Mechanics also may repair sheet metal, measure the tension of control cables, and check

Airline mechanics may need to disassemble an engine to test its parts for wear and tear.

for corrosion, distortion, and cracks in the plane's fuselage, wings, and tail.

Other mechanics find and fix problems that pilots describe, rather than finding and fixing hidden problems. For example, during a preflight check, a pilot may discover that the aircraft's fuel gauge does not work. To solve the problem, mechanics might troubleshoot the electrical system, using electrical test equipment to make sure that no wires have broken or short-circuited, and replace defective electrical or electronic components. For minor repairs, these mechanics might work on the runway while passengers wait for the plane to be repaired and cleared for takeoff.

Some mechanics work on just one type of aircraft, such as jets, propeller-driven airplanes, or helicopters. Others specialize in one aircraft section, such as the engine, hydraulics, or electrical system. Each system requires different skills and certifications. Airframe mechanics are authorized to work on any part of the aircraft except the instruments, powerplants, and propellers. Powerplant mechanics are authorized to work on engines and do limited work on propellers. Combination airframe-and-powerplant mechanics—called A&P mechanics—work on all parts of the plane except the instruments.

Avionics technicians repair navigation and radio communications equipment, weather radar systems, and other onboard instruments and computers. These technicians make complex electrical repairs.

Like most repair workers, aircraft and avionics equipment mechanics and repairers enjoy the challenge of examining and disassembling engines and other equipment to look for problems, then repairing and reassembling them. Whatever type of plane they service, most aircraft mechanics work in large hangars close to



airports. But if the hangar is full or the plane is on the runway, that means working outdoors at all times of the year—whether it's summer in Tucson, Arizona, or winter in Fargo, North Dakota.

Employment and earnings. Aircraft and avionics equipment mechanics and service technicians held about 133,570 jobs in May 2006, according to BLS.

Median hourly wages of airline mechanics and service technicians were \$22.95 in May 2006, according to BLS. For avionics technicians, BLS shows median hourly wages in May 2006 of \$22.57.

Qualifications and training. Aircraft and avionics equipment mechanics and service repairers must have good manual dexterity and problem-solving skills. And they should be able to work well under time constraints, sometimes tight ones.

Aircraft mechanics must have a high school diploma or equivalent. Most have attended 1 of about 170 trade schools or community colleges certified by the FAA. Many of these schools offer associate or bachelor's degrees in avionics, aviation technology, or aviation maintenance management. People seeking to become avionics or instrument technicians usually need at least an associate degree in electronics. Some mechanics learn on the job after high school, but this method of training is becoming less common.

(Continued on page 11)

Other careers related to air travel

The occupations profiled in this article are among many in the air transportation industry. Others include the following:

Airline station managers take care of the overall operations of an airline at a particular airport, requiring supervision of both flight and ground operations and coordination of the flight, cargo, baggage, and ground crews.



Airport managers plan and supervise maintenance and safety programs, negotiate leases with airport tenants (airlines), survey an airport's future needs and make recommendations related to those needs, set up the airport budget, promote the use of the airport, and train and supervise employees.



Baggage handlers, also called cargo and freight agents, load and unload passenger baggage and containers of airmail, air express, and air cargo shipments.



Clerical and office support workers perform a variety of administrative duties, including bookkeeping, typing, maintaining records and files, operating office equipment, and answering telephones.



District sales managers maintain contact with prospective customers and direct the activities of sales personnel to promote air traffic and sales of airline seats and cargo space.



Engineers are involved in the planning, design, testing, and analysis of aircraft and airports; different types of engineers work specifically with electronics, airport structure, environmental regulations, and flight methodology.



Financial analysts use data related to sales volume and the costs of fuel, maintenance, repairs, worker salaries, and other expenses to determine the financial status of an airline and what adjustments are needed to make it more profitable.



Marketing personnel write advertising copy, create slogans and logos, devise marketing schemes and special offers, buy advertising space and radio or television time slots, and attempt to draw new accounts to an airline.



Reservation agents provide travel information over the telephone to airline customers, including trip planning, seat availability, fare information, schedules, tours, meals, and other details relevant to the customer's flight plans; they also make flight reservations and accept payment information for tickets purchased over the telephone.



Ticket agents greet passengers when they arrive at the airport, check luggage, make seat assignments and reservation changes, sell tickets, and provide information about aircraft boarding, including that of flight delays and cancellations.

Photo © Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

(Continued from page 9)

In addition, aircraft mechanics almost always need certification from the FAA, unless they are working as apprentices or helpers under the supervision of a certified mechanic. To be eligible for basic certification, a mechanic must be a U.S. citizen able to read, write, and speak English and must complete a program at an FAA-certified mechanics school or have 18 months of work experience under the supervision of a certified mechanic. These mechanics must also pass oral, written, and practical exams. To keep their certificates current, mechanics need at least 16 hours of training every 24 months. This training is often offered on the job by employers.

The FAA offers basic certification in either airframe or powerplant mechanics. It also offers the combined A&P certificate that allows for certification in both. Today, most employers prefer that their mechanics have this combination. To qualify, mechanics must acquire at least 30 months of experience working with both airframes and engines, or have less experience and the completion of an FAA-certified mechanic school program. A&P certified mechanics also must pass written and oral tests and demonstrate that they can do the work authorized by the certificate. To stay certified, they need current work experience: specifically, at least 1,000 hours of relevant experience in the previous 24 months. Alternatively, they can take a refresher course.

Avionics technicians also need an FAA mechanic's certificate. Many gain avionics repair experience in the military or from working for avionics manufacturers. Additional voluntary certifications are available from professional associations. Avionics technicians who fix radios or radar must have a license from the Federal Communications Commission.

Some mechanics begin with a more limited repairman certificate. Repairman certificates are valid for only one place of employment and for only one or two specific job tasks, such as working on propellers or on instruments. Mechanics who have repairman certificates usually work for engine shops or airplane manufacturers rather than airlines.

In addition to considering education and certification, airlines value experience working on military aircraft. But most people with military experience still need additional training to meet FAA rules regarding civilian work.

The charms and chores of travel work

Working in air travel has many advantages. For starters, these careers come with perks, which may include the chance to fly free after a specified length of employment. Sometimes, these free flights extend to friends and family, too.

For flight attendants and pilots, travel is more than a perk: It's the job itself. These workers are paid to travel—and if they get the right assignments, they can see the world. When pilots and flight attendants must stay overnight to work their flights, airlines cover the hotel lodging costs, and most also pay for meals.

For times when they must pay the bill themselves, some airline workers—especially pilots and flight attendants—get discounts on hotels, car rentals, and vacation packages, and they can often swap with other airlines for free flights. Pilots and flight attendants in particular have plenty of time to enjoy these perks, too, since they may get between 10 and 21 days off per month.

Even for a veteran traveler, though, wanderlust has drawbacks. Most flight attendants and pilots work on small regional flights, not international or even transcontinental trips. They see the same cities every day. Earning the chance to work an international route takes time, skill, and luck. And traveling requires spending long stretches away from home. Moreover, because passengers travel day and night, the schedules of air travel workers are unusual and often involve extended hours.

New flight attendants almost always start on reserve status. Reserve status requires that, except during their guaranteed days off per month, they must be on call 24 hours a day and be ready to leave on a flight with only a few hours of notice. Some employees dislike the uncertainty of this arrangement, but it is generally considered one of the job's necessary drawbacks.

How often a pilot works depends on a number of factors, including seniority and which airline he or she works for. Many pilots are on call most of the time and do not have a set schedule.

Some workers tire of being in the cramped quarters of plane cabins for long periods of time. And as with many jobs that involve public contact, flight attendants and pilots are susceptible to frequent colds and minor illnesses. Their susceptibility is exacerbated by jet lag, long hours, and frequent moves.

Air traffic controllers do not receive travel benefits. As employees of the Federal Government, they are barred by law from accepting tickets or other gifts related to their work. But controllers who enjoy traveling can choose to relocate frequently; in many cases, relocation is likely.

Mechanics and air traffic controllers have flexible schedules. These workers are needed around the clock, which allows some workers to choose weekend or night shifts. Like other workers, mechanics and controllers have more say in shaping their schedules as they advance and gain seniority.

Whatever the occupation, working for an airline or at an airport is not always easy. The air travel industry depends heavily on customer satisfaction, so airline and airport employees are expected at all times to work quickly, efficiently, and cheerfully under deadline pressure. The frustrations can lead to job burnout.

But these jobs are still in high demand. As a result, many qualified people have difficulty finding work. Some people first work outside of the airline industry, gaining experience in other customer service jobs or for air freight companies. Then, they highlight their experience to help them land the position that they want.

It is not always easy to move out of entry-level jobs in air travel work. Jobs are competitive, and the demand for higher level positions is greater than the number available. According to people in the industry, promotions take time. New workers should consider, before accepting an entry-level job, whether they will be satisfied working in the position for a while.

Learning more

To find more information about occupations in the air transportation industry, visit a local library or career center. Many books, periodicals, and other resources describe air transportation occupations and how to prepare for them.

One of the resources available at many libraries and career centers is the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. The *Handbook*, which is available and searchable

online at www.bls.gov/oco, describes the nature of work, working conditions, earnings, employment, and training requirements of air transportation occupations that are studied by BLS.

Airline companies, airports, and offices of State employment services are another good resource for finding out more about air transportation-related occupations.

As mentioned in the article, serving in the U.S. Armed Forces is a good way to prepare for some aviation-related occupations. For more information about military job training, see “Military training for civilian careers (Or: How to gain practical experience while serving your country),” in the spring 2007 *Quarterly*. The article is available online at www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2007/spring/art02.pdf.

Many associations also provide information. Each of the following offers career advice, and most maintain lists of available jobs and scholarships.

Air Line Pilots Association International
1625 Massachusetts Ave. NW.
Washington, DC 20036
(703) 689-2270
www.alpa.org

Air Transport Association of America, Inc.
1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW., Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 626-4000
www.airlines.org

Association of Flight Attendants
501 Third St. NW.
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 434-1300
www.afanet.org

Helicopter Association International
1635 Prince St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 683-4646
www.rotor.com

Professional Aviation
Maintenance Association
400 Commonwealth Dr.
Warrendale, PA 15906
Toll-free:
1 (866) 865-PAMA (7262)
www.pama.org

Regional Airline Association
2025 M St. NW., Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 367-1170
www.raa.org

For more information about
FAA certificate requirements, Air
Traffic Collegiate Training Initia-
tive schools, and mechanic training,
contact:

Federal Aviation
Administration
800 Independence Ave. SW.
Washington, DC 20591
Toll-free: 1 (866) TELL-FAA
(835-5322)
www.faa.gov

Information about obtaining
a Federal Government position as
an air traffic controller or aircraft
and avionics equipment mechanics
and service technicians is available
from the U.S. Office of Personnel
Management through USAJOBS,
the Government's official employ-
ment information system. To locate
and apply for jobs, visit online at
www.usajobs.opm.gov or call an
interactive voice-response tele-
phone system at (703) 724-1850;
TDD: (978) 461-8404. 

