

Brooksville-Tampa Regional Airport  
Tower Tour February 2024  
By Paul Bryant

The EAA chapter 1298 sponsored a tour of the BKV control tower. On February 6, 2024, Mike McDowell, the control tower manager, welcomed nearly 20 chapters members and guests to the tower and briefed them on the operations of the tower. He also briefed the participants on the capabilities and constraints of the controllers. Mike said, "welcome to controller 101"...meaning: The BKV tower has no radar and relies solely on the controller's eyes and the use of binoculars when aircraft report to the controller. There are some newer technology capabilities that are in the planning stages for the BKV tower, but will not be available for a while. When the new technology is finally operational, it still will not be radar. However, it will definitely help the controllers with aircraft positions and safer operations. The enlightening tour gave all the participants a better understanding of the day-to-day operations and, also showed them a step-by-step process from the time a pilot initiated his call; from ground control through final take off and airspace clearance and vice versa. The tower uses strips and assigns an aircraft number to that script. The script moves along from the ground controller and handed over to the air controller when appropriate. A key note here is that on occasions, there is only one controller on duty and he is controlling both the ground side as well as the air side. Patience on the side of the pilot is truly appreciated during these staffing situations. This is noteworthy due to the fact the operations have drastically increased over the past year. Mike reported that BKV had more than 100,000 operations during 2023. No doubt a record year.

Since there is no radar, the tour group learned how crucial it is to report their location correctly during the initial contact with the tower and to follow the controller's specific instructions. Saying you are in one place when you are actually in another is a huge safety concern. Everyone needs to have total situational awareness of their specific location, listen to the radio, know where other aircraft are being directed and monitor incoming ADSB if you have that capability in your aircraft.

The Brooksville airport is in class D airspace. It is operated part time – 0700-2200 daily. Outside of these hours, it then becomes Class E airspace. For more information you can review the FAA's airport/facility manual or other sources, as appropriate.

Our group left with a greater understanding of the capabilities and constraints of the controllers, how the aircraft is process from one controller to the next and, an appreciation of the controllers' expertise. The tour certainly was a great way to introduce (re-introduce) the pilots to the airspace around and on Brooksville airport.

In addition, the two-way educational exchange between Mike and the pilots afforded the group the opportunity to ask and clarify any operational questions they might have had. The tour also provided a keen insight to the local ground and airspace movement challenges and a reminder that we all partners in safe and orderly operations.

Thanks to all who participated in the tour.

Paul





