



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

Every safe landing is a quiet win.

Each take-off and landing in Dubai is the responsibility of dans' Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs). These unseen experts steer thousands of flights, making quick and calculated calls that keep operations safe and flowing. dans' ATC team, comprising Watch Managers, ATCOs, ATC Ops Managers, ATCO Managers, ATC Procedure Specialists, ATCAs and ATC Training Specialists, forms the backbone of air navigation in Dubai's control area.

From the second dans' ATCOs start work at the tower control room, to the shift's last handover, they are handling real-time challenges. Every second counts in making Dubai's control area among the safest and most efficient in the world.

day in the life: Noora Almheiri, Air Traffic Controller

For a morning shift, my day will begin before sunrise. On my drive in, it is a habit of mine to check the weather and traffic directions. From the outside, there's a sense of calm before the complexity of the shift ahead. Once everyone has arrived, and prior to the beginning of any shift, we attend a structured team briefing to go over current general operations, reviewing updates and changes. These few minutes set the tone and ensure shared situational awareness.

In the tower, the rhythm of the day is determined by traffic. As tower controllers, we rotate between positions like arrivals, departures, ground, and planner. Each position has its own pace and focus. A maximum of two and a half hours is spent on any position before a mandatory break, which allows us to stay sharp and perform at our best. At Dubai Airport, operations are relentless and ever-growing: the movement never stops. On average, we handle over 1,200 aircraft movements daily, and every clearance must be precise and timely.

There is no standard day. One moment I'm guiding a smooth departure flow, the next I'm rerouting due to weather, coordinating medical diversions, or responding to operational anomalies. These moments demand rapid but sound decision making, and they happen often.

To do this job well, preparation begins outside the tower. I try to ensure I'm fully prepared for anything the day holds and to conserve my mental bandwidth for work. From how I plan my day to how I approach rest, everything feeds into being present and clear-headed during my shift. This role demands consistency, emotional regulation, and attention to detail.

At the end of the day, there is a quiet satisfaction that comes with this job. We may not be seen by the public, but the impact of our work is clear. Knowing that my team helped thousands reach their destinations safely, often without their ever realizing the complexity behind it, is incredibly rewarding. The job asks for focus and resilience, but it gives back in purpose, pride and perspective.