

Record of Conversation notes from CEN22LA130 Q/A visit:

The air traffic manager (ATM) had been at Aspen for 11 years or so, and had worked traffic as a controller, and now worked as the ATM.

Aspen is a level 6 tower, and they have 16 controllers and 2 supervisors.

In 2014, after one of the fatal accidents there (Aspen – CEN14FA099) an FAA team came in and along with the ATM at the time went to and changed the SOP so that they (Aspen) provide the instantaneous wind (when requested by pilot).

ATC is required to issue wind and will provide the SAWS (Stand Alone Weather Sensor) 2 minute average wind and any wind gust information. The wind gusts are the highest gusts from the SAWS in the last 10 minutes. The ASOS is the backup sensor and wind information for the field.

There are no wind sensors at the south end of runway 15, however, there are several (15 knot) wind socks located around the airfield. There is a 15 knot wind sock near center field location directly across from the tower with directional markings (figure 7).

The ATM stated he was surprised not more wind shear, but most of that stays at or above mountain top level. Given the wind flow, it was not too common to have “strong” tailwinds at the airport. But ATC will provide the pilot the wind information and let the pilot make the call.

When asked why they chose to use the wording “instantaneous wind” as part of the phraseology when reporting SAW wind, the ATM said he was not sure where that came from.

ATM stated he believes pilots feel pressured and will take more chances at Aspen because of the clients they are transporting.

Only supposed to provide instantaneous wind when requested, and SkyWest and Netjets frequently know that procedure and do request the instantaneous wind report. Lots of the business pilots know to ask, but GA community and other pilots (including other part 121/135) may not know.

FAA Tech ops is in charge of SAWS maintenance and can remote into the SAWS sensors if needed, but the FAA tech ops are based in Grand Junction and will and can make it out to the equipment quickly depending on need.

The ATM believed that the SAWS wind sensor picks up the wind gusts better than the ASOS. The SAWS updates every 3 seconds with the wind information.

The ATM stated there were 3 SAWS displays in the tower; located at ground control, local control and radar control positions.

The SAWS wind sensor has been around since the ATM had been there.

The ATM stated that many pilots became familiar with the procedures and things around Aspen using the NBAA site: [Aspen \(KASE\) \(code7700.com\)](http://Aspen(KASE)(code7700.com))

With the wind gusts staying on the display for 10 minutes, could have infrequent wind gusts but the displayed wind could keep the airport essentially “closed”... depending on airplane thresholds.

The ATM stated they have been certified as limited aviation weather reporting (LAWRS) as long as he has been at Aspen, and long before that.

In May, the first 5,000 ft of runway 33 was resurfaced in spots but the resurfaced area (center of runway) was not regrooved. The city is in charge of the airport surface and planned to resurface the rest of the runway in the fall.

The ATM was asked his thoughts on why there have been several excursions at Aspen, and he explained that it was just his opinion, but he thought it was due to pressure on pilots to get their clientele to their destinations; possibly because the runway was resurfaced and not entirely grooved all the way, and the un-grooved portion could be slick when they put on their brakes; and possibly due to popped tires or locked brakes.

Believes that instantaneous wind requests that pilots learn to request that through tribal knowledge or training.

The ATM stated he believed the ASOS does not capture the gusts as long or as good as the SAWS does.

A light day of aircraft in and out of Aspen is 40 to 50, a busy day is high 200s. Highest was 366 operations in a day. Due to the opposite direction of the traffic at Aspen usually in some kind of ground delay.

They got STARS a few years ago but it does not display any weather information.

Having no weather radar nearby creates challenge and would be helpful to have weather radar information on STARS.

They do not have lightning data available and would be nice to have.

They have put airplanes in “weather” due to not having weather radar information available at times.

They have no low-level wind shear information outside of PIREPs

From airport OPS and NWS tech:

NWS monitors and maintenance on ASOS. The ASOS and SAWS are located about 20 feet from each other, near the north end of the field. Wind sensors from ASOS and SAWS appear to be similar make and model but maybe on different software updates. Pictures below show the equipment around the tower and the airfield:



Figure 1. Example display of ASOS OID in ASE tower (right computer screen).



Figure 2. Example display of SAWS instantaneous wind display in ASE tower with 2-minute wind average in the upper left hand corner.

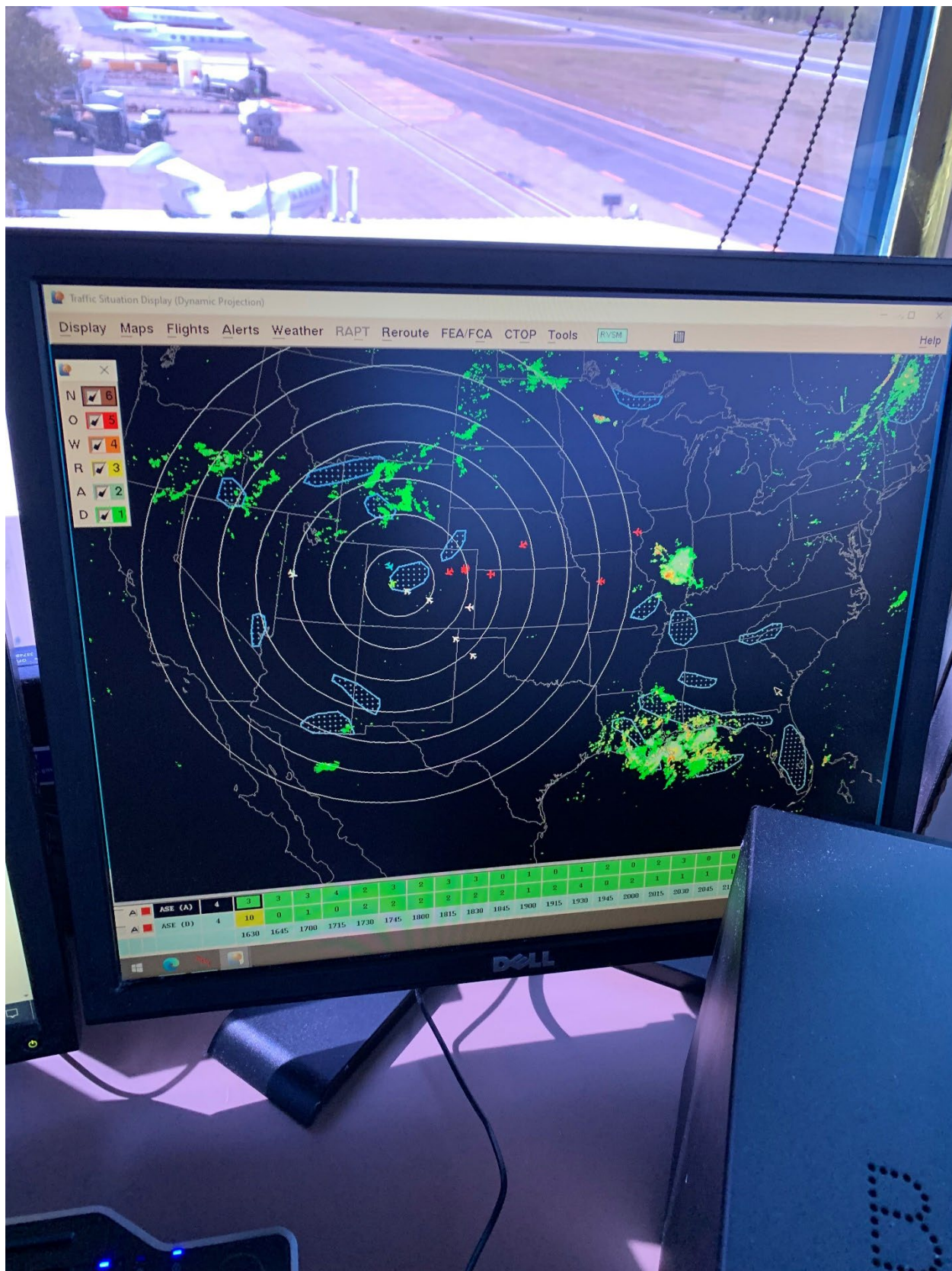


Figure 3. Example display of Traffic Situation Display (TDS) in ASE tower with weather overlaid.

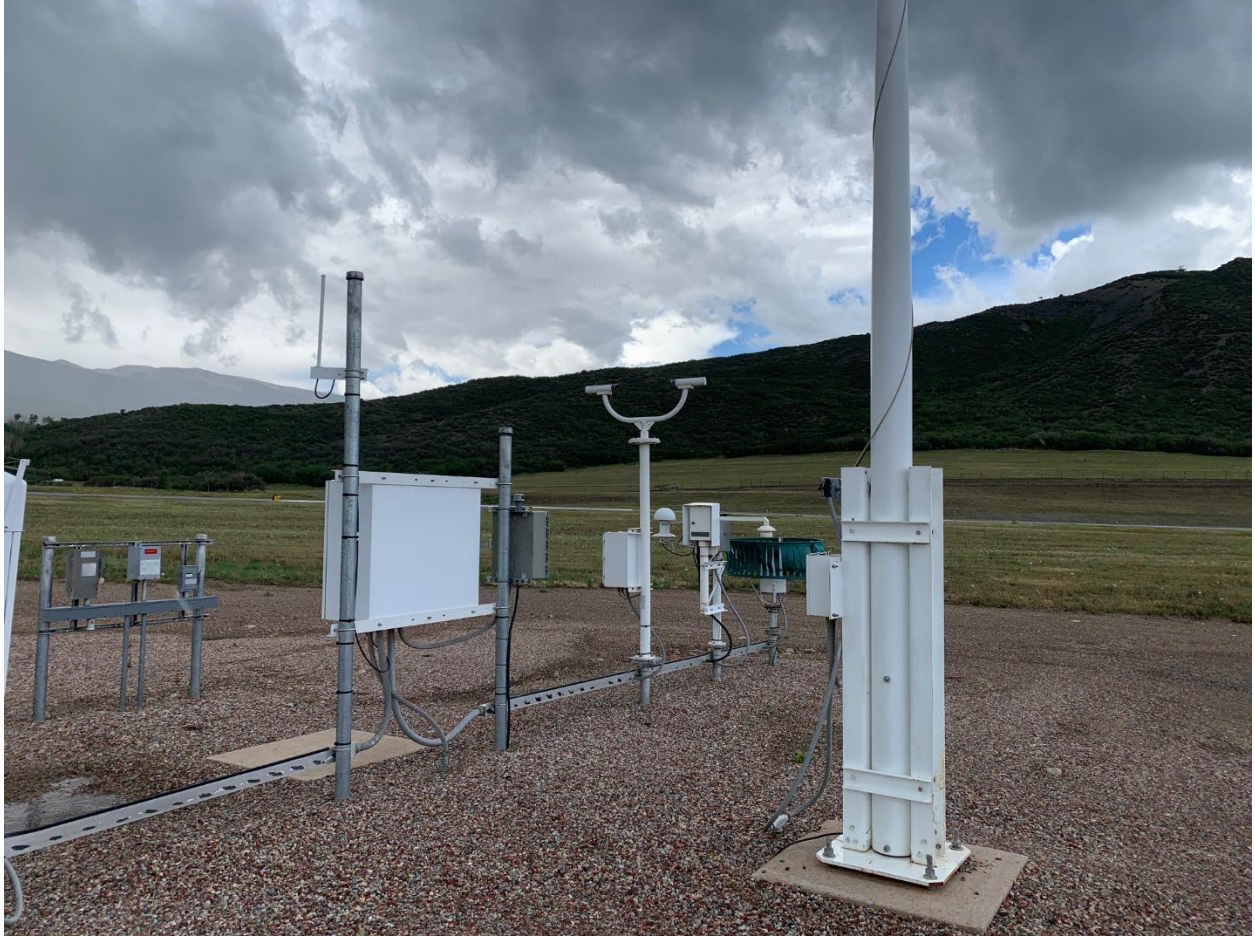


Figure 4. ASE ASOS equipment.



Figure 5. ASE SAWS equipment.



Figure 6. Wind sensors for both ASOS (foreground) and SAWS.



Figure 7. 15 knot wind sock located directly across the runway from ASE Tower.