

EIGHT - FOOT HIGH SPEED TUNNEL, NASA Langley Research Center. Named for its closed-throat test section dimension, this unique facility began operation in 1936. Typically, National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics engineers and scientists had to design their own pioneering facilities to accomplish their advanced work. Here, they used a 16,000 horsepower electric motor/fan to drive the circulating test airstream nearly to the speed of sound (Mach 0.9). It was the first high-speed tunnel capable of testing large models and actual airplane sections. America's high-performance aircraft of World War II were perfected here, and critical research also led to the development of supersonic aircraft. Though built of reinforced concrete, practical in Depression economy, high temperatures of the rushing air would have caused structural failure. So, a ventilating penthouse exhausted and inhaled large quantities of fresh air for cooling. The facility, now obsolete, serves as office and storage space.