

Using RFID for

SECURITY *and* EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Security is a top priority for event organizers and site operators. Hosting large crowds at an event or a facility comes with the responsibility of keeping those people safe and responding to emergency situations that may arise. Such situations should be expected any time large groups congregate, especially when alcohol or drugs are factored into the equation. **From multi-day music festivals, to major sporting events, to theme parks;** there are safety concerns involved with many, otherwise happy, outings and events.

Despite the known dangers and risks, most people are not discouraged from attending live events. According to a 2015 Nielsen study, “In total, as many as 32 million people attend music festivals a year, [and] per NFL and NCAA statistics, more than 17 million and almost 50 million fans, respectively, attended football games in the 2015 season.”¹ Fans will continue to go out to experience live events, but organizers need to be aware that large scale events are considered “a target for incidents triggered by accident or on purpose. (...) These assembly events need to be incident preplanned, so first responders can react with knowledge, to save lives and property.”¹ The need for sophisticated emergency management has led some event organizers to explore technological tools that will help them provide a safe environment for their guests.

INSTANT IDENTIFICATION

Knowing who is at your event is a major step towards effective crowd-monitoring and ensuring safety on-site. In the case of suspicious or unruly behaviour, staff can scan a guest’s wristband/pass to identify them immediately. A profile photo can be included within each guest’s registered profile and photos will appear on the screen of the scanner each time their wristband/pass is scanned. Permissions can be managed on-site, and any guest who is acting in an aggressive, or threatening manner can be escorted off-site with all access permissions removed.

¹ Sports Industry to Reach \$73.5 Billion by 2019. Darren Heitner, Contributor Forbes.com (October, 2015)



ACCESSING MEDICAL INFORMATION

RFID can also be used to provide event organizers and EMTs with important information about guests in the case of an emergency. While sometimes overlooked, this feature of the technology is of particular value in a time where safety concerns are mounting and many people feel unsafe attending events in large crowds. As noted in a CanadianSecurityMag.com post, “The music festival industry was under the microscope in 2014 due to four deaths that occurred within a two-week period across Canada. (...) Unfortunately, people die at music festivals every year. That’s a fact. There are murders, suicides, accidental deaths, many of which are drug or alcohol-involved.”¹

¹ Barry Wilding and Ken Hoggart, “Festival security: anticipating the unexpected” www.canadiansecuritymag.com/ (January 19, 2015).

Issues related to drug and alcohol abuse have become relatively commonplace both in the music festival and sporting event industries. While event organizers lament their inability to completely ban these substances from the premises they oversee, they can take steps towards being better equipped to deal with the negative outcomes of guests being overly intoxicated. In an opinion piece for the Sunday Telegraph, emergency responder Elliot Williams commented on the particular challenge of being on duty at music festivals, “They are often fast-paced, with peak periods during the day seeing our service really put to the test with a diverse range of patient presentations in rapid succession.”²

² Elliot Williams, “Why music festivals can be so challenging for emergency services”. The Sunday Telegraph: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/> (January 9, 2016).

One way to assist emergency responders is to give them access to all the info they need regarding the individual they are treating. When using RFID technology at a festival or event, this information is accessible with a simple scan.

Because each RFID tag is linked to a personalized online profile, staff members can scan a guest’s wristband/pass at any time to learn more about that guest. The information included in the profile can be specific to each festival, but generally includes basic identification as well as medical info (Ex: name, age, gender, postal code, emergency contact, allergies). This information can be very useful in an emergency situation where the individual may not necessarily be carrying any piece of identification. EMTs can use a handheld scanner to quickly scan the individual’s wristband/pass and learn what they need to treat them appropriately and/or find their emergency contact.

PREPARING FOR EVACUATION

** CBC Montreal: "Montreal police want festivals better prepared for terrorist attacks". www.cbc.com (July 3, 2017).*

Other potential incidents that raise concern at large events are extreme weather conditions and targeted attacks. The CBC reported that, "Recent terrorist attacks in Europe involving vehicles slamming through crowds prompted Montreal police to draft a guide to better prepare the city's popular festivals for similar attacks."

Event organizers everywhere are doing what they can to secure their sites and plan for a potential mass evacuation. While it is impossible to prevent weather incidents or targeted attacks, it is essential to be ready should these problems occur.

Having detailed identification about all guests, and a better understanding of their activity and location within the site, can be very useful in such situations. When using RFID for access control, organizers have real-time visibility over guest movement and crowd flow at their event - they know who is on-site and where they have most recently scanned. This allows for a more informed approach towards speedy evacuation of the site.



PEACE OF MIND FOR PARENTS

Another urgent situation, and major concern for parents taking young children to an event, is that the child may get lost. Amusement park operators have a particular interest in ensuring children's safety at their park as it is a top priority for most of their clientele. Many parents have rudimentary plans to deal with the situation, some will write their address and phone number on a piece of paper or a label in the child's clothing...almost all parents will tell their kids not to talk to strangers, but to look for a staff member and ask for help. All of these solutions, however, come with an element of risk and none of them re-unite the child with the parents very quickly.



A park that can offer a faster, more reliable option for child safety will obviously be most appealing to parents. When a child is wearing an RFID wristband, park staff can simply scan the wristband to find out who the child is and to notify his/her parents immediately. Each wristband is linked to a profile with information about the child, and children's profiles are paired with those of their parents. Parents receive an SMS notification once a staff member has scanned the child's wristband. Only staff have access to the personal information about the child as it is contained within their profile and is only accessible using a handheld scanning device. Parents can enjoy peace of mind knowing that, even when their child is out of view, the staff at the park are able to identify them and notify the parents immediately if there is a problem.

MAKING ALLERGY INFO ACCESSIBLE

Food allergies are increasingly common and, while most food and beverage vendors are aware of the risks associated with allergens, errors can still be made and people with severe allergies may unknowingly ingest something dangerous for them. In the case of food festivals, there are even higher chances that an allergen may be served to someone by mistake as so much food is being prepared and served in an open (unconventional) space. When using RFID wristbands for a food festival, guests can include their allergy information directly in their profile. Handheld scanners can be programmed to display the allergy info each time the guest scans at a food or beverage vendor. This reduces the risk of vendors offering a guest something that may cause a serious reaction. If a guest is having an allergic reaction on-site, staff can scan his/her wristband to learn what the allergy is and also who their emergency contact is. Access to this information can be extremely useful to both prevent allergic reaction incidents and also to deal quickly with those that do arise.



“An estimated 2.5 million Canadians report having a food allergy.”

As noted in a recent CBC article, “An estimated 2.5 million Canadians report having a food allergy. [Laurie Harada, executive director of Food Allergy Canada] said this means restaurants should make allergies a priority, just like they do for hygiene and making sure that their food is properly handled. ‘There’s a huge responsibility.’”¹ That same responsibility extends to all festivals and events serving large crowds. Any time food is involved, the possibility of an allergic reaction should be considered and taken very seriously. Using RFID technology is an effective way to communicate this information to food vendors in a clear and reliable manner. While errors may still occur, many may be prevented by the integration of this technology.

¹ Haydn Watters, “When customers with allergies dine out, who’s responsible for their safety?” CBC News (August 06, 2016).

KEY BENEFITS OF USING RFID FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



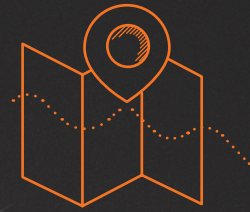
IDENTIFICATION

Guests can be identified at any time by scanning their wristband/pass - a profile photo can be included at registration and will be displayed on the scanner screen.



MEDICAL INFORMATION

Staff scan to learn important info about each guest. (Ex: name, age, gender, postal code, emergency contact, allergy information).



EVACUATION

Greater visibility of crowd flow throughout the site allows for more effective evacuation procedures.



CHILD SECURITY

Child and parent wristbands/passes can be paired; and parents notified immediately if a child gets lost.



ALLERGY NOTIFICATION

Staff scan a guest's wristband to be learn of any allergies they have - reducing the chance of serving errors.



*Contact us or visit our website for more information
on these and other RFID possibilities.*

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6600 Hutchison, Montréal, QC, CA H2V 4E1 • T 514-631-8282 • info@connectngo.com