Foreword

The National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) at the University of Southern Mississippi has established a National Laboratory dedicated to sports safety and security to assist spectator sports venue operators in assessing and validating systems and technologies for security use.

The National Laboratory provides a mechanism to aggregate specific safety and security requirements for the spectator sports domain as developed by security and venue operator practitioners through participation in a National Advisory Board. This Advisory Board includes participation from all professional sports leagues and the collegiate institutions. The National Laboratory, using industry requirements and operational needs, develops:

1. Impartial, vendor agnostic, and operationally relevant assessments and validations of safety and security solutions (systems) based on the community of interest (COI) requirements

2. Evaluation reports that enable venue operations and security personnel to select and procure suitable solutions; and deploy and maintain solutions effectively. In some cases process evaluations will be performed to provide newly devised procedures.

The evaluation program follows principles currently espoused by standing DHS validation programs (such as SAVER2) that are meant to assist end operators with objective and quantitative reviews of available commercial systems and solutions. Information obtained in the course of the assessment (including this report) will be made available to subscribers of NCS4 publications and to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for their use.
# Evaluators and Assessment Support

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GuestAssist Assessment Report
Text Messaging Systems

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1 Introduction

The risk is real. The time is now… For sports managers and affiliated staff worldwide, peak performance is no longer the only game day focus. Catastrophic events and elevated terrorist activity serve as constant reminders that sporting and entertainment venues are vulnerable to disasters that can result in significant damage to property, personal injury and loss of life. It is imperative that key personnel responsible for security operations at sporting events are familiar with risk assessment methods, including adequate training in identifying vulnerabilities and threats, improving physical protection systems, enhancing emergency response and recovery operations and building multi-agency and evacuation capabilities.

Several catastrophic events have lead to the ongoing research in this area. It is the goal of NCS4 to provide the world with insight to addressing the issues constituting potential and actual threats and risks to the ongoing security and safety of fans at sporting events and venues.

The purpose of this report is to assess and evaluate the use of the text messaging system of GuestAssist. Text messaging systems represent one area of safety that has been proven to make a difference through accelerated communication between spectators and security personnel.

Text messaging is the future and is cutting edge. It is the quickest means of communication today without literally “saying” a word. As the market continuously grows, it can be used to create avenues in which safety can be promoted. This system will be set up for the receipt of targeted messages, to current and potential threats, but the opening read rate is incredibly higher and the interest in sending and receiving text messages is insurmountable. This system allows for providing time sensitive opportunities, in many new ways, for business services and venues.

This technology will be used by Subject Matter Experts (SME’s) to monitor reported suspicious behavior throughout the venue. This system will provide a means of tracking observations and activities enhancing safety and security. It also lends itself to answer any questions or concerns fans may have such as parking situations, specific locations, medical needs, handicap requests and important weather alerts.
2 Objectives

In 2009, the NCS4 Advisory Board coupled with participating representatives of the center identified pressing issues and solutions that would change the world of technology as it relates to sports safety and security and venue operator needs. This round table of discussion sparked an interest that identified issues with crowd management that would bring a solution to a better guest experience.

After the needs assessment, the next step was to identify a solution that addressed the issue. The identification process brought about the conceptualization stage in which experts determined applicable solutions. SME’s experienced large scale sports venues before and after the new technology was set into place. This allowed them to see the impact of the new technology and its impact on operational processes.

The aim of this research is to assess the implementation of GuestAssist text messaging services and how it relates to our mission to conduct innovative research and enhance training capabilities as well as develop integrated security solutions.

This report will only verify GuestAssist claimed functionality for its text messaging system solution. The goal of this assessment is to verify GuestAssist advertised features and functions. The intent is not for comparison purposes with other similar vendor products.
3 Analysis

As safety continually becomes a higher priority at sporting venues all over the world, the need for technology at venues is paramount. Not only have league owners of professional sports recognized the need but also administrators at institutions have voiced concern about the safety and security of fans while attending sporting events across the nation. A large scale facility of spectators of 20,000 or more is a prime target for terrorist acts because these venues are considered soft targets. Text messaging services similar to GuestAssist are being evaluated for crowd support and crowd management inside and outside venues. Venue owners and operators understand this technology is a viable component of safety and security.

Each venue is unique depending on size, structural logistics, staffing and the nature of the event.

The primary focus points are:

1. Serve as an immediate and precise means of communications between the spectator and security personnel.
2. Aid and assist in problematic situations such as the need for immediate medical attention, important weather alerts, civil unrest.
3. Give spectators the assurance to know they can notify security personnel without fear of being retaliated against by an unruly spectator.
4 Identification of Software for Evaluation

The NCS4 laboratory conducted a comprehensive evaluation consisting of procedures that involved evaluators, SME’s and others in the community of interest:

1. The vendor community was informally solicited to meet and discuss capabilities and solutions relevant to spectator sports security that were aligned with the interests of the Advisory Board and council.

2. Priorities were established via a community of interest survey as a mechanism to focus on initial evaluations that were meaningful and supportive of priorities.

3. SME’s were interviewed and site surveys were performed.

4. Vendor participation interest was essential in the selection process, however, participation was limited due to resource constraints.
For this evaluation, NCS4 focused on an informal methodology designed to objectively evaluate GuestAssist. The method chosen was semi-structured interviews with evaluators. The evaluators based their findings solely on functionality, aptitude, and maintainability.

This methodology was designed to objectively evaluate texting solutions against a standard set of criteria. The evaluators and SME’s assessed GuestAssist against their stated and advertised performance requirements.

The following criteria measured against the performance requirements are as follows:

1. Gives the fans a discreet and quick way to reach a venue's command and control center to report all kinds of stadium issues (i.e. unruly fans, medical emergencies, housekeeping and guest service issues, etc.)

2. Allows the command and control center to respond to issues within seconds eliminating sometimes lengthy delays in fans or event staff reporting an issue where an incident has often escalated or cannot be resolved by the time a response team arrives.

3. Allows the command and control center to enter a 2-way communication with fans via text.

4. Venue can create internal groups (i.e. management, supervisors, staff, etc.) to send important notifications by text.

5. Staff can send an important message directly from their cell phones to an internal group.

6. Allows for full and flexible reporting features to perform post-game analytics on the venues trouble spots (i.e. reports can be viewed by location of occurrence, time of occurrence, incident type, resolution, etc.)

7. Web-based, easy to use platform; training can effectively be done online in about 30 minutes.

8. Flexible and adaptable system where templates and groups can be easily added, changed and used within a couple of minutes.

9. GuestAssist provides excellent technical and customer support and can be easily reached during events if there are any questions or issues.
6 Evaluation Process

GuestAssist was evaluated by a select group of SME’s that consisted of professionals from law enforcement, medical, and emergency management. The second group, Information Technology Evaluators," focused on the technical aspects of the software. This group included members from the USM staff. This group reviewed technical platform capabilities, the level of effort required to install and configure the software, and the behind the scenes technical challenges.

Prior to the initial system evaluation, both IT and SME Evaluators attended a tutorial process seminar to become familiar with the process and requirements of GuestAssist. It was important for all evaluators to establish a solid grounding in the process and begin with a clear view of their role going into the evaluation.
7 GuestAssist Performance Results

1) Gives the fans a discreet and quick way to reach a venue's command and control center to report all kinds of stadium issues (i.e. unruly fans, medical emergencies, housekeeping and guest service issues, etc.)

- The Command Post received numerous issues during the course of the University of Southern Mississippi 2010 home football season. These reports varied from unruly fans, security issues, and medical emergencies. The use of GuestAssist text messaging services allowed law enforcement and medical personnel to decipher information and properly respond to issues within seconds of receiving a text.
- GuestAssist allows fans to work in conjunction with law enforcement and medical personnel to properly maintain the safety and security of any event. This safety and security component also serves as an excellent deterrent to criminal and fan misbehavior.

2) Allows the command and control center to respond to issues within seconds eliminating sometimes lengthy delays in fans or event staff reporting an issue where an incident has often escalated or cannot be resolved by the time a response team arrives.

- All texts received throughout the football season were immediately displayed on law enforcement and medical personnel computer screens. This allowed lead safety and security personnel the ability to immediately determine and allocate appropriate actions needed to resolve issues. By utilizing GuestAssist, text messaging service issues were resolved anywhere from 10 seconds to two minutes thus preventing issues from escalating and preventing further infractions from occurring.

3) Allows the command and control center to enter a 2-way communication with fans via text.

- GuestAssist text messaging service allows fans to directly communicate safety and security issues with command and control.

4) Venue can create internal groups (i.e. management, supervisors, staff, etc.) to send important notifications by text.

- Command Post is fielded by Police, AAA ambulance services, Emergency Management, Event Operations Group supervisors and members of NCS4. All members of the Command Post were able to send immediate notifications to
fans by text depending on the specific issues brought to the attention of the agency in need.

5) Staff can send an important message directly from their cell phones to an internal group.
   - This process was tested through the phones of NCS4 team members and proven to be successful. GuestAssist text messaging services enables command and control the ability to receive messages on multiple communication devices.

6) Allows for full and flexible reporting features to perform post-game analytics on the venues trouble spots (i.e. reports can be viewed by location of occurrence, time of occurrence, incident type, resolution, etc.)
   - All pertinent information was logged and recorded by the various agencies involved in responding to the texting issues. These issues were recorded on Excel files and stored with the proper agency. This process was simple and allows these agencies to set up and maintain a file of reports, trouble spots, location, time, incident and resolution.

7) Web-based, easy to use platform; training can effectively be done online in about 30 minutes.
   - Training is effectively accomplished within 30 minutes.

8) Flexible and adaptable system where templates and groups can be easily added, changed and used within a couple of minutes.
   - This process has been tested and is flexible as well as adaptable by all agencies throughout the Command Post.

9) GuestAssist provides excellent technical and customer support and can be easily reached during events if there are any questions or issues.
   - GuestAssist technical support is readily accessible before, during and after the game. All issues and questions have been handled adequately and promptly.
   - GuestAssist further enhances customer support with a Monday morning debriefing with their clients to review all issues or complaints.
9 Evaluator Comments

Evaluators found the GuestAssist text message system presented quick and immediate results. This allowed Incident Command to respond and address issues within 5 to 10 seconds after receiving texts from spectators. Evaluators agreed that the GuestAssist text messaging system provided uncomplicated and user-friendly capabilities. This system is fully featured and provided intuitive user interface mechanisms throughout the software such as bookmarking events, template management, extracting segments, and account management.

The University of Southern Mississippi home football schedule consisted of six home games in which the GuestAssist text message system was utilized. Throughout the course of the season Incident Command received numerous text messages that required police and medical intervention. Of the numerous amounts of text messages that evaluators received, 48% were found to be legitimate complaints and/or issues that required immediate police and/or medical intervention. Follow-up reports indicated that police and medical intervention was swift and no further safety and security issues escalated after initial contact with subjects. This allowed safety and security personnel to maintain their assigned post and optimize resources to maintain adequate safety and security standards.