Toronto Pan Am
Sports Centre

The Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre (TPASC) provides world-class athletic experiences for athletes in training and fitness enthusiasts of all ages. The state-of-the-art facility includes two internationally sanctioned 10-lane 50-meter pools, a world-class dive pool and dryland dive training facilities, a four-court gymnasium, an indoor running track, climbing wall, a high-performance athlete testing center, studio spaces, and a fitness center.

Need for Expanding Emergency Coverage

With the fitness amenities spread all over the 312,000 square-foot, multi-level complex it could be a challenge to provide emergency communication for everyone in the building. "Our customers are on numerous floors with various entrances and exits," said Catherine Hughes, Director of Building Operations for TPASC.
"Also our staff offices are spread out over the building."

Hughes and her colleague Parrish Offer, Director of Business Development, recognized the need to expand the current system to increase the communication coverage. "Our only emergency notification system prior to Alertus was the fire alarm system with voice communication and strobe light alarm for the visually impaired," Offer explained. "We added the Alertus Emergency Mass Notification System to provide an additional means of communicating with our staff and customers in an emergency."

Expansion through Fire Control Panel Integration

Hughes and Offer integrated the Alertus System with the building's existing fire alarm control panel. "The fire alarm is one means of communication but being able to add automatic emergency messaging on all addressable screens in the building is an emergency preparedness

best practice we wanted to achieve," explained Hughes. The innovative fire alarm interface from Alertus takes fire alarm event information from the fire panel, applies smart technology and automatically broadcasts messages over multiple communication paths, including intelligible voice messages.

TPASC has a two-stage fire alarm system. For a Stage 1 fire alarm, the Alertus System automatically broadcasts an alert message on digital screens throughout the building letting people know the alarm has sounded and instructing them on what to do. For a Stage 2 fire alarm, the Alertus System automatically receives the signal from the fire panel and broadcasts Stage 2 alert messaging. Screens go red with messaging that instructs everyone to evacuate the building even after the building-wide fire alarm system announcement is made.

Alertus Digital Signage Override can deliver a facility-wide emergency notification in a matter of seconds.

For other types of emergencies, the fire system voice communication and the Alertus System operate as complementary communication means. "The notification system for our customers is all about automation," said Hughes. "We can now automatically communicate anything from a missing child to an incoming severe weather warning to an active shooter."

Additionally, the fire panel system provides verbal communication while the screens with Alertus messaging provide visual communication. "This assists us in communicating with persons with auditory impairments while being universally helpful," added Hughes. "We do have strobe lights that speed up in a stage two alarm that are indicative of a stage two alarm, but people who cannot hear the verbal directions by the annunciator are disadvantaged without the additional visual messaging that Alertus provides. The Alertus technology is also universally assistive. Our members appreciate seeing the messaging and parents can talk to children about it while following the instructions."

Alertus' fire alarm control panel interface and text-to-speech functionality provides comprehensive emergency notification.

Looking Ahead

TPASC is ready if a major emergency situation occurs, as the emergency notification system is tested regularly and is deployed during annual fire drills.

"Our principle reason for our notification system is emergency preparedness," explained Hughes. "We chose the Alertus Emergency Mass Notification System because it did what we wanted: put emergency messaging on all addressable screens, integrate with our fire panel and produce automatic messages."

Moving forward, Hughes wants to be able to inform people of any changes at the Centre before they arrive and continue to communicate any important messages during their visit. "A next step may be to have emergency notification pushed through cell phones," she explained. "We aim for automatic communication by multiple means to best reach customers with diverse communication preferences."