



Case study



Evolv Helps Amalie Arena Deliver Game Day Fun with Lightning-Fast Security Screening

Amalie Arena

LOCATION: Tampa Bay, FL

HOME TO the NHL's Tampa Bay Lightning

OPENED: 1996, renovated in 2012

MULTIPURPOSE: Hockey and Other Sporting Events, Concerts, Special Events

CAPACITY: Up to 21,500

WEBSITE: www.amaliearena.com

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Minimize ingress security wait times
- Reduce the number of nuisance alarms without compromising security
- Decrease time to complete secondary security screening checks
- Create frictionless security screening by enabling guests to walk through security screening
- Enable guests to spend time in concessions and make it to their seats before the puck drops
- Reduce security guard fatigue resulting from walkthrough metal detectors

Solution

People

- Worked with the Amalie Arena team to test out Evolv Express® while awaiting NHL approval
- Delivered onsite training for existing staff for deployment
- Provide ongoing technical support
- Trained the Amalie Arena team to leverage Evolv Insights® analytics data

Process

- Collaborated with Amalie Arena for rapid training and deployment
- Evolv Engineering Solutions team configured and deployed 3 dual-lane and 5 single-lane Evolv Express systems in two days

Technology

- 3 Evolv Express Dual-Lane Systems
- 5 Evolv Express Single-Lane Systems
- Evolv Cortex AI®
- Evolv Insights

Outcomes



Slashed ingress times from 25-30 minutes to virtually close to none



Reduced nuisance alarm rate by nearly 50% compared to legacy metal detectors



Saw a 15% increase in fans in their seats by the time the puck dropped—nearly 80% of capacity



Reduced average time for each secondary screening check from an average of 45 seconds to 20 seconds



Increased amount of time guests spend in pre-game festivities and concessions



Improved security by reducing security guard fatigue and lines outside of the arena



Allowed the Food and Beverage team to better plan for and deliver fresher products to guests



Despite thorough vetting of Evolv, Tripp Turbiville, Director of Security and Transportation Services for Amalie Arena, admitted that he was apprehensive on the first day that their Express systems went live. That fear immediately melted away with the support of Evolv on their go-live date. In fact, during their first concert, geared towards classical music lovers, Turbiville recounts how one “would think that we wouldn’t have detected any weapons due to the demographics of our guests, but we found a handgun in an older lady’s purse that night, which really shined the light on our decision. Since that first event, we’ve found some additional handguns and knives. Evolv works exactly as promised.”

Amalie Arena Known for Memorable Guest Experiences

Tripp Turbiville began working at Amalie Arena when it opened in 1996 and oversaw all of the medic teams in the facility.

Since then, he's held several roles in operations and became the Director of Security and Transportation Services in 2020. "It's been an unbelievable experience," he recounts. "I've seen multiple ownership groups, and all of them have been amazing to work for. The current owner, Mr. Vinik, is an amazing person and is a real innovator."

Delivering incredible, memorable guest experiences is a top priority for the Amalie Arena, which hosts over 150 events throughout the year—NHL Tampa Bay Lightning games, concerts, comedy shows, and more. The arena was home to the NCAA Frozen Four in early 2023 and has hosted a long list of notable events throughout its storied history. It boasts lightning-throwing Tesla coils, an 11,000 square-foot Pepsi Porch with great vistas of the city, and a massive five-manual, 105-rank digital pipe organ. And at the center of it, all lies a desire to create an unbelievable experience for anyone who walks through the arena doors.

"The ultimate goal is for all our guests to come to an event and have fun," Turbiville remarks. "We sell cotton candy and popcorn," he jokes. "If you cannot have fun at a place like that, then you're at the wrong place."

Safety Is Critical for Any Event

Security is a critical part of creating a fun and exciting environment for Amalie Arena.

"One of our biggest pillars is safety," Turbiville explains. "Whenever our fans come into the arena, we want them to feel safe and enjoy the game, concert, or event they've come to see." Justin Bechtold, Director of Guest Experience at Amalie Arena, concurs: "Safety is a number one priority. If you don't have that, then you have nothing. Everything must start with security."



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The Negative Impact of Metal Detectors on Guest Experience

The Amalie Arena had relied on walkthrough metal detectors for security screening for a number of years.

"We used the metal detectors for primary screening and then, for NHL games, the x-ray machines for scanning bags," Turbiville says. "We ran eight metal detectors on each side of the arena covering the two gates where 80% or 85% of our fans would enter. As soon as we would open the doors and begin scanning guests with the metal detectors, we knew that we would have 60 to 90 minutes of 'organized chaos.'"

Bechtold explains that security and ticketing flow into the arena comes in waves. "We have an initial wave when the doors open," he explains. "They want to see Thunder Bug beat the drum for the grand opening. Being stuck in a long security line can be frustrating and even deflating. The second wave comes 10 to 20 minutes before the puck drop. This is when we get a rush of people running late who want to get into the arena and swing past the concessions on the way to their seats. The metal detectors couldn't handle these spikes and guests inevitably got stuck in security lines."

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I had experienced Evolv in other venues and knew what it was capable of doing. After we decided to implement them, I counted down the days until we went live. I knew they would transform our guest experience coming into the building.”

- George Raub, GM of Food & Beverage, Amalie Arena

The Negative Impact of Metal Detectors Extends to Security Guards

Not only did the security screening process and metal detectors negatively impact guests, but they also hurt the security staff.

“It’s difficult to recruit good security personnel, and keeping our staff was difficult due to the metal detectors,” Turbiville says. “They did not like managing the process. They were unable to interact with our guests as they were focused on managing the technology, and the screening process was slow and intrusive.”

Security fatigue also diminished the efficacy of the screening process with the metal detectors. “After someone manages security screening with a metal detector for 30 or 40 minutes, fatigue begins to set in, and the chances they will miss something due to the high rate of alarms and secondary security screening process grows,” Turbiville says.

The high rate of secondary checks with the metal detectors was a big problem for guests and security guards. “Any number of devices with metal would set off an alarm—belt buckles, shoes, cellphones, you name it,” Turbiville says. “The security guard would have them take everything out of their pockets and send them through the metal detector again. Then, if an alarm still went off, they were sent through secondary security screening. This took another minute. It was very frustrating for guests and our security guards.”



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Having a backlog of people at the entrances delays the entry for as many as 15 minutes before the start of the game or event. This created a ‘snowball’ effect of guests rushing to concessions at the last minute—and some either had to miss the start of the game to get concessions or had to wait until the first intermission to get beverages and food.”

- George Raub, GM of Food & Beverage, Amalie Arena



Entry Delays Made Concessions Experience and Planning Unpredictable

The delays getting into the arena could also impede guests from getting food and beverages and still making it to their seats on time for the start of the event.

Essentially, the concession staff was at the mercy of the ingress spikes. “Having a backlog of people at the entrances delays the entry for as many as 15 minutes before the start of the game or event,” notes George Raub, the General Manager of Food and Beverage at Amalie Arena. “This created a ‘snowball’ effect of guests rushing to concessions at the last minute—and some either had to miss the start of the game to get concessions or had to wait until the first intermission to get beverages and food.”

Raub explains that those who waited until intermission would often ‘double dip’—namely, they would order what they planned to order when they first arrived as well as what they planned for the first intermission. “This created a lot of unpredictability that made it difficult for us to plan food preparation throughout the event,” he says.

Lengthy Testing of Security Solutions Lead to Selecting Evolv

In light of the above challenges, the Amalie Arena had its eye on upgrading its walkthrough metal detectors for a lengthy period of time.

“We tested multiple systems before making the decision to go with Evolv,” Turbiville relates. “We had vetted these options before the NHL approved the use of Evolv in NHL arenas. But once they did, we knew what our choice was going to be. We really liked Evolv because it gives us a frictionless guest experience. In the final stages of evaluation, we visited another hockey arena that has Express systems in place and were impressed with what we saw.”

Another aspect Amalie Arena liked about Evolv was the Evolv Cortex AI. “It’s constantly learning what is and isn’t a threat,” Turbiville says. “It also aggregates data from the entire Evolv customer base, which ensures the threats that matter is detected and the ones that are nuisances are removed over time.”

Training the Security Team and Going Live with Evolv

With the help of Evolv Solutions Engineering, the Amalie Arena team concluded they could replace their 16 walkthrough metal detectors at their two main doors with four Evolv Express systems—one dual lane system and a single lane system on each side of the area.

These systems were complemented by one dual lane at the Premium entrance, one single lane at the VIP entrance, and one single lane apiece at the Gate C and Suites entrances. Even with the high number of systems, the accelerated deployment was executed according to the needs of the Amalie team.

“The Express systems showed up on a Tuesday or Wednesday, and we had them up and running on Thursday,” Turbiville says. “We scheduled the majority of our security staff for a two-hour training with the Evolv team that Wednesday evening. They had a chance to get hands-on experience with the Express system and to pose questions to the Evolv team that stayed at the arena until everyone had asked their questions.”

“We leveraged the test kits from Evolv to see what would and wouldn’t set off alarms,” Turbiville says. “I wanted to make sure we gave our security staff the tools they needed to learn how to operate the Evolv Express before we put it into place. The Express system is very easy to use and learn. We didn’t have any issues.”

Kiana Dozier, Evolv’s Customer Success Manager, and other members of the Evolv team coordinated with the Amalie Arena security team before the arrival of the Express systems on how and when to schedule training, to unpackage and set up each system, and what changes were required in their ConOps. “For training, we were able to train over 100 security guards that Wednesday,” Dozier says. “Every guard was able to try out every single position. For those guards unable to attend the Wednesday evening training, we scheduled a two-hour training on Thursday afternoon.”

Two events were scheduled for Thursday and Friday evening, and the Evolv team was on site both nights to ensure the Amalie Arena team had all the assistance they needed to be successful. Despite thorough vetting of Evolv, Turbiville admits that he was apprehensive on the first day the Express systems went live – but not for long. “My apprehension evaporated when I saw the support from the Evolv team—from the training the night before we went live to the on-site support for our first two events,” he says.

While Turbiville was nervous before the go-live date, other members of the team like Raub couldn’t wait. “I had experienced Evolv in other venues and knew what it was capable of doing,” Raub notes. “After we decided to implement them, I counted down the days until we went live. I knew they would transform our guest experience coming into the building.”

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Everyone is responsible for security. Guest services, law enforcement, and housekeeping walking around the arena—our eyes and ears on the ground. The success of the Evolv deployment was truly a team success.”

- Tripp Turbiville, Director of Security and Transportation Services, Amalie Arena

Fewer Systems Means Freed Up Ingress Footprint

Evolv is having a positive impact at Amalie Arena in a number of ways.

As a starting point, the arena recaptured significant space consumed by the 16 walkthrough metal detectors at their two main gates, going from 16 systems to four Evolv Express, consisting of six lanes total. As with the metal detectors, the security team manages each Express lane with three security personnel—one in the Flow Control position, one in the Threat Resolution position, and one more security operator to facilitate traffic flow. As a result, approximately 30 security guards were reallocated to other areas in the arena and the security perimeter, bolstering the arena's overall security posture.

No More Long Lines for Puck Drop

The lengthy lines at the two entrances to Amalie Arena, including the Pepsi Porch, evaporated with the deployment of the Evolv.

"We have thousands of guests waiting at the doors before we open up for a Lightning game," Turbiville says. "It used to take 20 or 25 minutes to get that mass of people through the metal detectors." Now, with the Express systems in place, Bechtold explains, the lines are gone and many guests pass through security screening in a matter of seconds. "For those who haven't gone through an Express lane before, they walk through the lane and look around and ask if they still need to go through security screening," Bechtold relates.

Getting guests out of the heat and rain quickly is critical to a positive experience, according to Turbiville and Bechtold. "Florida can get hot and it can rain during certain times of the year," Bechtold says. "The faster we can get the crowds into the building, the more enjoyable experience they are going to have."

Turbiville explains that this impact isn't just limited to the crowds waiting for the doors to open, but extends all the way to the ingress rush right before the puck drop. "One of the members of the security team sent me photos of the Pepsi Porch after the puck dropped following the first two games with the Express systems in place, and it was almost empty," Turbiville says. "That was never the case with the metal detectors. Back then, we had lines coming in while the game was already in progress. Now, if you're not in your seat in time for the puck drop or the start of a show, it's because you were late getting here. It's no longer the result of being unable to get through security on time."



Leveraging Evolv Insights® Analytics

Working with Dozier, Turbiville and his team generate Evolv Insights reports after each event and track the trends they see.

“Having the reports broken up into five-minute increments provides us with some valuable insights,” he notes. “We can see at what times and at what gates fans arrive. This enables us to plan security staffing at our ingress points and to know how many guests arrive after the start of a game or an event.” This data can now be used from ingress to concessions to better plan for and allocate staff to meet the needs and behavior of the crowds.

Faster Ingress Improves Game Day Fun

By leveraging the speed and precision of the Express with the data of Insights, Turbiville is transforming ingress at Amalie Arena – and hockey fans are reaping the benefits.

“We’re seeing upwards of a 15% increase in fans who are in their seats at the beginning of Lightning games,” Bechtold says. “This equates to 15,000 out of 19,000 seats.” But not missing the start of the game isn’t the only benefit. This also means guests have more time to get food and beverages before the puck drop. “Guests should not need to forego certain parts of their initial experience at an event,” Raub comments. “They should be able to see the preshow, sing the national anthem, and get their concessions before the event starts. They should not be forced to choose. Before, with the metal detectors, they, unfortunately, were put in that situation if they got stuck in a long security line.”

Raub explains that Evolv is having a positive impact on the Food and Beverage operations as well. “We can now spread out the production pieces as the patterns of purchased have changed and are more predictable,” he says. “The Evolv deployment removes the huge spikes we could experience in the past. It removes the ‘snowball’ effect where guests would combine their food and beverage orders from their initial arrival at the first intermission. It also enables us to have a fresher product because we don’t need to create such a huge number at once. For example, we no longer need to have 500 items of a certain food item ready at the first intermission but rather only 250. The other 250 items can be sold before the puck drops.”

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The data shows they are catching firearms and catching knives and other threats. [Amalie Arena’s] guests have an exciting but safer experience, which I think is huge.”

– Kiana Dozier, Customer Success Manager, Evolv Technology

Security Staff Frustration and Fatigue Melt Away

“Our security staff is much happier with the Express systems,” Turbiville relates.

“Our Flow Control staff interact with the guests as they walk through the Express lane. They’re joking with the guests and when an alarm does occur, the secondary check is much faster and easier than with the metal detectors. We had no idea where the threat was located with the metal detectors. However, with the Flow Control and Threat Resolution tablets, the red box marks the area on the guest’s body where the potential threat is located. The security staff really likes the fact that they can tag the detected threats based on their type. This provides us with valuable information in our Evolv Insights analytics. In addition, the Evolv Cortex AI capability enables the system to get more and more accurate over time—both from our data as well as the entire Evolv customer base.”

Knowing where the potential threat is located makes security screening more efficient, less intrusive, and even more effective. “We no longer need to guess as to the location of the potential threat,” Turbiville says. “We get a lot of out-of-town guests attending NHL games— fans from Canada and the Northeastern U.S. They often don’t have time to go back to their hotel rooms before the game starts, after spending the day shopping and having a good time. As a result, they show up with a bag full of things they bought. Evolv makes this screening process go dramatically faster with them.”

Both the quality and the quantity of the scans have made an impact on the security staff. “We went from around half of everyone setting off an alarm with the metal detectors to a fraction of that with the Express systems,” Turbiville observes. “This 50% reduction translates into a much better experience for the guests. Security screening is much easier, and they are able to get into the arena much faster.”

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Better Security Screening Leads to More Weapons Detected

The Express systems debuted at the Amalie Arena during ingress for a classical music concert.

“You would think that we wouldn’t have detected any weapons due to the demographics of the guests,” Turbiville says. “But we found a handgun in an older lady’s purse that night, which really shined the light on our decision. Since that first event, we’ve found some additional handguns and knives. Evolv works exactly as promised.”

Dozier, who reviews Evolv Insights analytics with the Amalie Arena team, confirms that weapons are being detected and the arena is safer as a result. “The data shows they are catching firearms and catching knives and other threats,” she notes. “Their guests have an exciting but safer experience, which I think is huge.”

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- Justin Bechtold, Director of Guest Experience, Amalie Arena

Innovation Focused on Safety and Guest Experience

Adopting new technologies and innovating processes is a team effort and the success of the Evolv deployment is something Turbiville attributes to the entire staff at Amalie Arena.

“Security isn’t just up to the security team,” Turbiville says. “Everyone is responsible for security. The success of the Evolv deployment was truly a team success. The teams have collaborated closely to ensure we are delivering the most optimal experience to guests. With the rollout of the Express systems, we can handle a much higher volume of traffic flow. As a result, guest services increased the number of ticker takers behind us to ensure they are keeping up with the speed of security screening.”

Being an innovator is a core value for Amalie Arena. “We were one of the first NHL arenas to go out and implement the Express to keep our guests and employees safe. That’s really important to us,” Bechtold says. “We want to be world-class off the ice just as the Lightning are on the ice. This means every single person needs to have a great experience and come back to the arena whether the Lightning win or lose. From the time a guest steps foot on our property, we want you to have a great off-ice experience—from the security to the ticket takers, to guest services, to housekeeping. Evolv is a critical part of this undertaking.”

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- Justin Bechtold, Director of Guest Experience,
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Contact us to learn more about helping to create
safer zones where you live, learn, work, or play.

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