

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Airport



YOUR FIRE AND SECURITY SOLUTION



CASE STUDY

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is the busiest airport in the world. Every year, over 104 million people travel through Hartsfield-Jackson to destinations domestically and across the globe. The Atlanta Airlines Terminal Company (AATC) is responsible for all management services for Hartsfield-Jackson, managing over 7.4 million square feet.

Priority number one is the safety and security of all passengers from the second they step onto the airport curb until they board their plane. One of the largest safety features of the airport is the networked fire alarm system, which contains approximately 20,000 points. Hartsfield-Jackson trusts only one fire alarm service provider to manage their fire alarm system; that company is AFA Protective Systems, Inc.

ISSUES PRIOR TO AFA ON THE RUNWAY

Since 2010, AFA has provided fire and life safety service to Atlanta Airport. AFA is considered an integral partner to the operation of the airport, keeping the sprawling property safe and code compliant. The relationship between AFA and Hartsfield-Jackson evolved from the AATC's need to standardize its rapidly changing fire alarm system to one service vendor.

Starting in the early 90's, the airport grew rapidly due to the 1996 Summer Olympics. During this time, maintenance problems with the fire alarm were a common occurrence. By 2005, the fire alarm system was not functioning to the airport's standards, which prompted the AATC to initiate a complete system overhaul.

After the fire alarm upgrade, the AATC tasked its general maintenance provider with maintaining all assets for the building, including the fire alarm. Once again, the system was not being maintained adequately. "We thought we had a good partner and time had proven otherwise," said Kirk Hale, Program Manager for the AATC. "Every other day was a new face. As a result, the corporate relationship was floundering. There was no stability."

The AATC knew it needed a change in fire alarm vendors. In an attempt to specialize the maintenance and support of the fire alarm the airport hired a series of fire alarm vendors, which gave rise to new issues and frustration. One vendor exceeded the device capacity on a fire alarm loop resulting in the need to re-engineer the entire system. A different vendor would consistently trigger the alarm causing a security breach, which would upset the flow of airport traffic.

The AATC realized that the fire alarm system was not getting the priority attention it deserved and it was impacting the efficiency of the airport. Due to the size of the system and the dynamic nature of the airport campus, "where change is the only constant," the AATC realized it needed a dedicated and established fire alarm vendor.

GETTING OFF THE GROUND WITH AFA

"When I started with the AATC in 2010, partnering with AFA was one of the first critical and strategic decisions that was made. I am happy to report that our AFA partnership has been one of the best decisions that the AATC has made and continues to pay dividends 10 years later." –Dr. Kofi Smith, President & CEO.

AFA took over fire alarm inspection and maintenance services for Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Airport in 2010. AFA was tasked with taking complete responsibility for the fire alarm system and its functionality. Fire alarm maintenance for the airport is demanding due to the size of the system and nature of the property. AFA was able to rise to the task, dedicating a team of full-time employees to the airport.

AFA became the standard. First, AFA was able to resolve all outstanding issues with the system in place and develop a close partnership with the AATC. AFA's constant presence on the site also insured that no new issues would arise like they did before. "I don't lose sleep at night worrying about the functionality of the fire alarm system. And I haven't for over 10 years," said Kirk Hale.

Since AFA is the sole source provider of the fire alarm system, AFA is able to monitor the capacity of the system and can anticipate any additional work, growth or additions. "As the system grows, our partnership grows," said Justin Demps, AFA's Airport Project Manager. "There are constant upgrades to the system. The fire alarm system should not be a nuisance. We try to stay behind the scenes and complete our work to keep the customer happy. We work to solve any issues before setting up a meeting. All of the work we do is in the best interest of the customer."

As the AATC's trusted partner, AFA has played the role of fire and life safety consultant. The partnership has resulted in the airport's use of modern technology in a few innovative applications. AFA recently provided a solution to solve an issue the airport was experiencing with their transit system between concourses. The railway tunnel was full of brake dust from years of use, causing the tunnel's beam detectors to consistently set off the fire alarm. These alarms would stop train movement and impact passengers trying to make their flights.

AFA was able to provide a VESDA system as a solution. VESDA (an abbreviation of Very Early Smoke Detection Apparatus) is a laser-based smoke detection system, which samples the air and can decipher between smoke and general dust. The AFA-installed system can now decipher between smoke and brake dust, causing these false alarms to cease.

AFA PROVIDES MILES OF VISIBILITY

Great partnerships last. Since its founding in 1873, AFA has taken a "partner-oriented" approach toward its customers. The relationship AFA has established at Atlanta Airport is in many ways, the epitome of AFA's partnership approach. The AATC staff spoke at great length about the strong partnership it has with AFA and why this relationship is special. The three biggest reasons were: **Responsiveness, Engagement and Trust.**

RESPONSIVENESS

"AFA will respond to anything. They have 24/7 on call services. AFA will respond immediately to mechanical issues or anything that is needed. They are unique because when you have a system as large and integrated as a fire alarm system, you are going to have issues that come up. AFA is responsive and addresses those areas. They always communicate."

**–James Taylor
Facility Manager
AATC**

ENGAGEMENT

"AFA is here all the time and active in all meetings. Since AFA works to maintain the system and is the contractor for construction projects, they look out for issues that would adversely affect the maintenance side. AFA's level of engagement has allowed them to know the airport and how the network is distributed. AFA is always proactive in looking out for the overall health of the system. They take total ownership."

**–Kirk Hale
Program Manager
AATC**

TRUST

"AFA is integral. If there's an alarm, AFA is quietly handling the problem. There is an element of trust. AFA does things behind the scenes and you know it's working. As an airport partner, AFA works well with our other vendors and partners. AFA is one of the few contractors that have to be in every room."

**–Marshall Ogando
Facility Coordinator
AATC**

CONCLUSION

AFA has successfully managed Atlanta Airport's fire alarm system for the last 10 years. AFA's partnership approach provides the type of service the airport needs and deserves. As a vote of confidence, AFA was recently awarded the installation contract for Hartsfield-Jackson's addition of Terminal F. As a result, Terminal F's fire protection was seamlessly integrated with the existing Hartsfield-Jackson fire alarm system.

The AATC measures AFA's performance and reviews their numbers during their weekly maintenance meeting. Regarding AFA's performance, Kirk Hale expressed, "The numbers look great. AFA is an indispensable partner for both the AATC and the airport. Just like any good relationship, our relationship with AFA is built on trust and communication. It continues to grow year after year due to their effort and attention. We are very happy with AFA as our partner."

