

Media release

For immediate release

New safety app aims to save lives, strengthen emergency response in rural areas

Calgary, AB, June 8, 2017 — Canadians now have access to a new level of personal emergency assistance and peace of mind, backed by an organization known for its expertise in finding and caring for critically ill and injured patients.

Today STARS publicly released SOLUS™, an easy-to-use smartphone app that enables individuals to request and receive 24/7 emergency assistance anywhere in Canada where a cell signal can be received.

SOLUS tracks the user's location in real time and in an emergent situation will connect him or her with an emergency communications specialist in the STARS Emergency Link Centre. STARS will then notify the user's pre-defined emergency contacts and will co-ordinate the appropriate level of response within minutes.

While STARS has been monitoring registered sites and lone workers for more than two decades, this is the first time the non-profit is offering its services in a product designed for individuals.

"We had people asking us for a personal version of the safety and monitoring services we offer larger businesses, so we've harnessed those services and put them in the palm of your hand," said STARS' director, business development, Erin Sharp.

"Our goal for this app is the same as always: to help someone on what is likely their worst day, possibly saving their life. Leveraging our knowledge and resources in a new way to provide a convenient safety tool for people is a natural extension of our regular operations."

The app is suitable for anybody who works, travels or plays alone in rural or dangerous environments, where medical assistance may be far away and difficult to connect with. Those who work in agriculture, the resource sectors and professionals who are frequently on the road will find it as useful as casual motorists and recreationalists will.

Other apps exist to monitor individuals on a subscription basis, but SOLUS is uniquely positioned because of its integration with STARS' Emergency Link Centre, said Karen Walker, emergency communications specialist.

"We can quickly and seamlessly co-ordinate emergency responses with provincial health systems and our partners on the ground," Walker said. "Our service is further set apart by the involvement of our emergency physicians in medical emergencies."

An innovative feature of the service is STARS' Neighbour Helping Neighbour safety network – a voluntary database of farmers, lone workers, industry medics and first responders that populates STARS' emergency mapping software. These local individuals can potentially be called to a patient's side as a first line of assistance during an emergency while medical personnel are en route. SOLUS users are encouraged, though not required, to enroll in the program.

"As we expand our Neighbour Helping Neighbour safety network with SOLUS, I'm particularly excited about how we can use it to strengthen the rural emergency response system," said Walker.

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SOLUS Backgrounder



DESCRIPTION

SOLUS™ is an easy-to-use smartphone app that enables you, your family, friends and employees to request and receive 24/7 emergency assistance anywhere in Canada. SOLUS is for you if you work, travel or play alone in rural or dangerous environments, where medical assistance may be far away and difficult to connect with.

HOW IT WORKS

SOLUS provides you with a valuable safety net immediately upon registration. The app tracks your location in real time. If you require urgent assistance, the app connects you with a live person 24/7 in the STARS Emergency Link Centre. STARS will notify your pre-defined emergency contacts while ensuring the appropriate level of response (which may not necessarily be a STARS helicopter) is co-ordinated within minutes. SOLUS does not replace 9-1-1, but will function in support of the emergency response system.

FEATURES AND BENEFITS

More than just monitoring. SOLUS is provided by STARS and its Emergency Link Centre, which has a 20-year history of saving lives in remote locations and is able to quickly co-ordinate emergency responses with provincial health systems and ground services. Our service is further elevated by having at least one of our 100 emergency physicians oversee medical emergency calls.

Quicker response. Through our Neighbour Helping Neighbour safety network, somebody local could be at the your side sooner to provide basic assistance while medical personnel are en route.

Low cost solution for individuals. While other organizations offer safety monitoring packages to businesses, we are one of the first to provide such a robust remote emergency assistance tool to individual consumers... all for only **\$9.99/month**. No hardware required – the app works on Android and iOS devices.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

SOLUS was developed through more than a year of planning, research, development, and testing. Technological partners were contracted to develop the app, website and customer management/billing system, but STARS retains ownership and oversight of the service. Revenue generated from user subscription fees will help fund STARS' core operations.

ABOUT STARS EMERGENCY LINK CENTRE

The STARS Emergency Link Centre (ELC) has provided monitoring and emergency response co-ordination services for 20 years to various industries, providing peace of mind to organizations and employees working in rural or dangerous locations. The ELC specializes in rural mapping and can locate resources and people that 9-1-1 services do not have access to. With SOLUS, the ELC has the ability to custom-tailor the emergency response to the severity of incident. This can include alerting the user's emergency contacts, nearby workers and neighbours through the Neighbour Helping Neighbour safety network; providing the advice of an on-call transport physician; ensuring local ground paramedics are dispatched; and, if necessary, dispatching a STARS helicopter air medical team to the site.

ABOUT NEIGHBOUR HELPING NEIGHBOUR

Even with quick dispatch, in rural and remote areas it can take first responders and paramedics some time to reach patients. In the meantime, studies suggest the mere presence of another human being can significantly improve a patient's outcome by bringing hope, encouragement and easing pain. By volunteering to enroll in STARS' Neighbour Helping Neighbour safety network, you can be the first line of help to somebody else in need. In some areas, STARS already has a significant database of neighbours — farmers, lone workers, industry medics or first responders, for example — but more are needed. Medical training is not required.

ABOUT STARS

STARS is a charitable, non-profit helicopter air ambulance organization that provides time, hope and life-saving support to critically ill and injured patients. Our doctors, nurses, paramedics and pilots work with a team of dedicated support staff and community partners to save lives through rapid and specialized emergency medical care and transportation. STARS operates 24/7 out of six bases across western Canada, where it has carried out more than 36,000 missions since it launched in 1985.

For more information, visit solus.ca or stars.ca