



**BERTHA W. HENRY**, County Administrator

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May 8, 2015

Mr. James DiPietro  
Administrative Director  
Board of Rules and Appeals  
1 North University Drive  
Suite 3500 B  
Plantation, FL 33324

Subject: Local Amendment to Building Code for Bi-Directional Amplifiers in Facilities

Dear Mr. DiPietro:

County staff has been working to identify interference issues that have been affecting Broward County's public safety radio system. There are many causes that can be attributed to interference; however, most recently, County staff identified bi-directional amplifiers (BDAs) in high rise buildings in the Cities of Aventura and Hallandale Beach as a cause of significant interference.

Bi-directional amplifiers are signal boosters that are primarily used to solve coverage problems. Typically, impenetrable areas such as buildings, tunnels, parking garages, underground areas are some of the locations where BDAs may be needed. When configured correctly, a BDA is an important device because it assists our first responders with communication in these impenetrable areas in an effective manner. We encourage Cities to consider requiring BDAs in buildings to assist with public safety communication inside the building; however, per the Federal Communications Commission (FCC 11-53 and FCC 13-21) they must be configured correctly to avoid impacting the public safety radio system.

In the buildings in the Cities of Aventura and Hallandale Beach, County staff was able to locate these devices by performing "field sweeps" that scanned the area for interference. This is a time consuming process that requires a considerable amount of resources to identify the interference. Once identified, it was determined that the BDAs were not configured correctly; thus adversely affecting Broward County's public safety radio system. When the public safety radio system is affected, communication to our first responders is limited and it can impact the ability to respond in a timely manner to emergency situations for our first responders, citizens, businesses and visitors. County staff is currently working with the vendor who installed the BDAs to properly configure the devices.


To ensure that BDAs are configured correctly, County staff is requesting a local amendment to the Florida Building Code be reviewed and approved to allow for County staff in the Office of Regional Communications and Technology (ORCAT) to sign-off on the configuration of any bi-directional amplifiers that are installed in buildings and facilities. Our overall goal is to minimize the impact that BDAs may have on the public safety radio system and public safety.

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County staff from the Office of Regional Communications and Technology is prepared to meet with the Broward County Board of Rules and Appeals (BORA) to further discuss this request at your next available meeting.

We look forward to hearing from you on this request and assisting us in this important initiative. If you have any questions, please contact Rick Carpani, Director, Office of Regional Communications and Technology at 954-357-8678 or via email at rcarpani@broward.org.

Thank You.

  
Bertha Henry  
County Administrator

BH:AJ:lr

cc: Broward County Board of County Commissioners  
Joni Armstrong-Coffey, County Attorney  
Rob Hernandez, Deputy County Administrator  
Alphonso Jefferson, Jr., Assistant County Administrator  
Rick Carpani, Director, Office of Regional Communications and Technology  
Leonard Vialpando, P.E., Director, Environmental Licensing and Building Permitting Division  
Broward County Consolidated Communications Committee