



BERTHA W. HENRY, County Administrator

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May 8, 2015

Municipal Managers

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

Dear Colleagues:

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, and 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 can impact their ability to respond in a timely manner to emergency situations for citizens, businesses and visitors. County staff is currently working with the vendor who installed the BDAs to properly configure the devices.

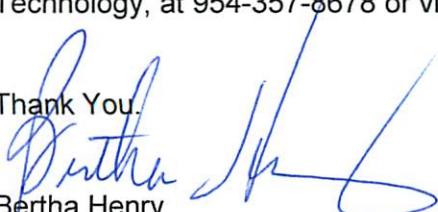
To ensure that BDAs are configured correctly, County staff is requesting a local amendment to the Florida Building Code be reviewed and approved by the Broward County Board of Rules and Appeals (BORA) that will allow for County staff in the Office of Regional Communications and Technology (ORCAT) to sign-off on the configuration of any bi-directional amplifiers that are installed in certain buildings and facilities. Until such a local amendment can be approved, we are requesting that each municipality allow for ORCAT to be included in your permitting process to sign-off on any facility that installs a bi-directional amplifier. Our overall goal is to minimize the impact that BDAs may have on the public safety radio system and public safety.

Broward County Board of County Commissioners
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We look forward to your cooperation and support in this initiative. We have requested to be included on the Board of Rules and Appeals agenda at their next available meeting. 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