



A Positive Voice for Sand Key

May 23, 2023

Sand Key Civic Association Supports and assists resident associations and other (business) members in matters that are of benefit to Sand Key as a whole. I am speaking on their behalf today about two specific provisions that are part of F.S. 633.202.

## HISTORY

During the tragedy of 9/11 Fire Department communication equipment was ineffective inside the Twin Towers. The FD staff couldn't hear each other. 20 years later the FL legislature enacted a law that COUNTIES would have jurisdiction over communication equipment in high rise buildings via FS 633.202. In 2021, HB 1209 in kicked the compliance timeline can down the road a bit from implementation in 2021/2022 to 2024/2025.

## WHAT DO HIGH RISE BUIDINGS NEED TO COMPLY WITH PER FS 633.202?

Existing high rise buildings must comply with 1). minimum radio strength for FD communications and 2). 2-way radio comm enhancements.

Issues & What the Statute Does Not Address:

**Q: Who decides what systems comply?**

A: We can't get an answer on this. The SKCA has worked with your group and others for four years without being able to get to this answer.

NOTE : There are buildings that were intent on being proactive who have wasted \$100K on systems and have been told by the fire marshals to turn them OFF as they interfere with the fire marshals communications systems!

**Q: Who is the "authority having jurisdiction"?**

A: Fire Marshalls. But there are 19 of them in Pinellas County and apparently, there is no consensus amongst them.

**Q: Who pays for the testing, compliance and new equipment of the Statute?**

A: (Implied – the home owner). However, this really is a County/Fire Department issue.

## **WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE**

Seeing this as the infrastructure issue that it is, other US counties have taken a pro-active role. Sarasota and Manatee Counties installed an advanced, 18-tower public P25 radio system and the Counties have paid for it. There are many other examples of counties addressing this issue successfully, and as their responsibility.



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## THE SKCA is asking you to:

1. Please take this issue seriously.
2. To implore the 19 Fire Marshalls to get consensus on the appropriate testing companies for high rise buildings.
3. To decide the proper equipment necessary for their personnel's safety and lastly
4. Understand that it their financial responsibility to install and maintain the necessary equipment

The truth is that the SKCA and others on Sand Key have been trying to work this out for five years. We have only months left and need your help!

Thank you for your time.

## SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

F.S. 633.202 § 18

**(18) The authority having jurisdiction shall determine the minimum radio signal strength for fire department communications in all new and existing buildings. Two-way radio communication enhancement systems or equivalent systems may be used to comply with the minimum radio signal strength requirements. However, two-way radio communication enhancement systems or equivalent systems are not required in apartment buildings 75 feet or less in height that are constructed using wood framing, provided that the building has less than 150 dwelling units and that all dwelling units discharge to the exterior or to a corridor that leads directly to an exit as defined by the Florida Building Code. Evidence of wood frame construction shall be shown by the owner providing building permit documentation which identifies the construction type as wood frame. Existing high-rise buildings as defined by the Florida Building Code are not required to comply with minimum radio strength for fire department communications and two-way radio communication enhancement systems as required by the Florida Fire Prevention Code until January 1, 2025. However, by January 1, 2024, an existing high-rise building that is not in compliance with the requirements for minimum radio strength for fire department communications must apply for an appropriate permit for the required installation with the local government agency having jurisdiction and must demonstrate that the building will become compliant by January 1, 2025. Existing high-rise apartment buildings are not required to comply until January 1, 2025. However, existing high-rise apartment buildings are required to apply for the appropriate permit for the required communications installation by January 1, 2024.**



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**\*\*NEW LEGISLATION**

HB 1575 which becomes effective on July 1, 2023 states that all high rise buildings in the State must be tested by January 1, 2024 to determine if they meet the minimum radio signal strength for fire department communication. If they do not meet the minimum requirement, they must install a BDA (bi-directional amplification system) at an average cost per building of \$100,000 by January 1, 2025.