



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 23-0336A, Version: 1

Subject:

Resolution adopting countywide minimum standards for radio frequency testing in new and existing high-rise structures; and providing for effective dates.

Recommended Action:

Approval of a resolution adopting a countywide minimum signal strength of -102dBm for all new and existing high-rise buildings in all critical and non-critical areas with a Delivered Audio Quality of 3.4 or better and the submission of proof of compliance to Pinellas County Safety and Emergency Services to obtain authorization to retransmit the radio signal.

- Chapter 633, Florida Statutes, the updated Florida Fire Prevention Code, deemed the authority having jurisdiction shall determine the minimum radio signal strength for fire department communications in all new and existing buildings.
- Article II, Chapter 62 of the Pinellas County Code, the Pinellas County fire protection authority shall exercise specific powers, including determining minimum service levels, for each municipal and volunteer fire department and fire protection district within the county, and to compel such departments to take any action necessary to ensure that they are operating at the minimum level prescribed by the authority.
- Existing high-rise buildings are not required to comply with this minimum radio signal strength for fire department communications until January 1, 2025. However, by January 1, 2024, an existing high-rise building that is not in compliance, must apply for an appropriate permit for the required installation of a two-way radio communication enhancement system with the local government agency having jurisdiction and must demonstrate that the building will become compliant by January 1, 2025.
- This standard will provide for consistent enforcement across all jurisdictions and provide guidance for requiring signal enhancements when needed as it pertains to the Pinellas County Radio System.

This item has no fiscal impact upon Pinellas County.

Strategic Plan:

Deliver First Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.1 Maximize partner relationships and public outreach

5.2 Be responsible stewards of the public's resources

5.3 Ensure effective and efficient delivery of county services and support

5.4 Strive to serve the needs of all Pinellas County

Summary:

Chapter 633 of Florida Statutes is requiring that all new and existing high-rise buildings meet a minimum radio signal requirement by January 1, 2025, therefore, fire departments, whether enforcing the fire safety codes within the legal boundaries of incorporated or unincorporated Pinellas County,

Florida must require all new and existing high-rise buildings to maintain a minimum signal strength of -102 dBm for all critical and non-critical areas with a Delivered Audio Quality (DAQ) of 3.4 or better. Proof of compliance must be submitted to the Safety and Emergency Services Department for retransmission authorization in accordance with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Background Information:

Chapter 633 Florida Statutes, the updated Florida Fire Prevention Code, is requiring all new and existing high-rise buildings to meet minimum radio signal strength for fire department communications. 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.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact to the county.

Staff Member Responsible:

Jim Fogarty, Director, Safety and Emergency Services

Partners:

Federal Communications Commission
Clearwater Fire and Rescue
Dunedin Fire Department
East Lake Fire Rescue
Gulfport Fire Department
Largo Fire Rescue
Lealman Fire District
Madeira Beach Fire Department
Oldsmar Fire Rescue
Palm Harbor Fire Rescue
Pinellas Park Fire Department
Pinellas Suncoast Fire Rescue
Safety Harbor Fire Department
Seminole Fire Rescue
South Pasadena Fire Department

St. Petersburg Fire Rescue
Tarpon Springs Fire Rescue
Treasure Island Fire Department

Attachments:
Resolution