



COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: May 21, 2025

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE COMMITTEE, AT ITS APRIL 9, 2025 MEETING, DIRECTING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO IMPLEMENT A BLUE LIGHT SAFETY AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM ALONG THE BEACHWALK ON A TEMPORARY, PILOT PROGRAM BASIS AND TO PRIORITIZE THIS PROGRAM IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends accepting the Resolution to implement a Blue Light Safety and Emergency Communication System pilot along the beachwalk.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the October 30, 2024 City Commission Meeting, at the request of Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt, the Mayor and City Commission approved a referral (C4 AK) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee ("PSNQLC") to discuss the implementation of a Blue Light Safety And Emergency Communication System along the beachwalk and baywalk.

The item was heard at the December 13, 2024 PSNQLC meeting and slated to return to PSNQLC with an update on a possible plan and locations for the communication boxes. The item was discussed at the April 9, 2025 PSNQLC and moved to the full commission with a positive recommendation to implement the pilot program along the beachwalk.

ANALYSIS

Many police departments, parks, public transportation facilities, hospitals, and colleges/university campuses utilize emergency call boxes. These devices enable citizens to contact emergency services quickly and directly. Emergency call boxes allow police and fire responders to pinpoint exact response locations and offer nearly immediate assistance to individuals who do not have a cellular phone. Additionally, the mere presence of emergency devices may provide a sense of security and reassurance while deterring potential criminals.

However, these devices also present several challenges. The most significant is the rise in false alarms. One article out of New York City reported that up to 88 percent of all call box activations received were false alarms. The tendency for false alarms places a significant strain on limited police and fire resources who would be required to respond to these often remote and difficult to access locations. False alarms could also divert attention away from genuine emergencies and prolong response times for actual calls for service.

An additional concern related to placement near the beach is the impact on wildlife, specifically sea turtles. Sea Turtles are protected by the US Endangered Species Act of 1973 and Florida

Statute Chapter 370. Miami Beach shorelines are a nesting habitat for three species of protected sea turtles – the Loggerhead, Green, and Leatherback sea turtles – with a nesting season runs from April 1st through October 31st each year. Sea turtle nestling and hatchling emergence usually takes place at night and artificial light can disrupt natural nesting and emergence cues, causing false crawls and disorientations.

To minimize the disruption of sea turtle nesting and hatchling habits, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recommends the use of long wavelength (red, amber, orange), low, and shielded lighting. In addition, the recently amended Turtle Nesting Protection Ordinance (Ord. 2024-4652) prohibits artificial exterior lighting within line-of-sight of the beach from being directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach at nighttime, through the implementation of several measures such as but not limited to shields, repositioning, and replacements. Call boxes can be customized with color options for the lights, and this factor will need to be considered when evaluating the use of devices that include a flashing beacon and lights visible from the ocean.

Lastly, regular call box tests to ensure functionality are labor-intensive and will require weekly verifications with the 911 Center to ensure each box is operational, physical testing of the units, coordinating maintenance when issues are identified, and following up to ensure proper resolution. The recommended solution would be to find a vendor able to perform the majority of these activities as opposed to using City staff to perform weekly and/or regular maintenance for the proposed call boxes.

Staff contacted the University of Miami, Florida International University, and the Hialeah Police Department to see which vendors provide their emergency call boxes. The primary vendors involved are Telcom Data, Ramtel, and Talkaphone. Their product offerings include various options for mounting and installation including pedestal, column, wall mount, and pole mount. There are also a variety of accessories available including beacon lights, wired handsets, video cameras, and even an AED defibrillator is an option on one specific device. The units can be powered by solar, 120v electric, or power over ethernet. Communications options include traditional landline telephone, cellular telephone, or voice over internet. Due to the wide range of mounting options, accessories, and communication methods, pricing can vary significantly. The lowest cost options start at approximately \$2,000 each and can go up to \$10,000 each or more depending on accessories. These prices do not include installation, maintenance, or ongoing power and communication costs.

Below are depictions of some of the general options available:



Potential Implementation Options

A comprehensive site assessment was carried out to explore viable locations based on power availability, distribution of locations between all three areas of the city, and proximity to locations with the most amount of pedestrian traffic. It was determined that the highest demand for emergency box installation is found at the following locations:

- 22nd Street
- 36th Street
- 53rd Street
- 79th Street

Each location presents unique advantages and limitations. Preliminarily, for the call boxes to be functional, both 22nd and 36th Street locations meet the necessary conditions for wired electrical power and LAN/telephone line connections. The 53rd Street location would need to rely on a cellular connection, while the 79th Street location would need to utilize solar power and a cellular connection.

Based on preliminary market research on power and network availability, locations have been classified into three possible categories with room for tiered implementation:

- Option A – Power and hard wire network for 22nd and 36th Streets
 - The Police Department's buildout of public safety cameras along the Beachwalk can provide both electrical power and network connectivity for the two locations.
- Option B – Power but no hard wire network for 53rd Street
 - The Police Department's current buildout of public safety cameras along this section of the Beachwalk will allow for electrical power for this project, but network connectivity is still under construction. Cellular connection would need to be used until City network connectivity could be implemented.
- Option C – no power and no hard wire network 79th Street
 - As with option B, the Police Department's current buildout of public safety cameras along this section of the Beachwalk will allow for electrical power for this project, but network connectivity would still need to be used until City network connectivity could be implemented.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The costs of each potential option are delineated below:

Option A – Power and Hard Wire Network (22nd/36th Streets): **\$71,734.20** (for both sites)

- Equipment: \$26,372.10
- Installation: \$9,495.00 (per location)

Option B – Power and No Hard Wire Network (53rd Street): **\$30,008.00**

- Equipment: \$20,513.00
- Installation: \$9,495.00

Option C – No Power and No Hard Wire Network (79th Street): **\$30,008.00**

- Equipment: \$29,513.00

- Installation: \$9,495.00

The total projected cost to activate all four (4) locations is approximately **\$131,750.20** excluding the optional Total Protection Plan which includes 24/7 support services for an estimated additional monthly cost of \$1,500.00.

CONCLUSION

Research regarding emergency call box placement and financial impact was carried out by the City as requested. After evaluation of the various options, costs and capabilities, the Administration believes that a pilot program to test out the system would prove beneficial.

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

No

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Police

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

Co-sponsor(s)

Commissioner Joseph Magazine

Condensed Title

Accept Rec/Pilot of Blue Light Safety/Emergency Communication System on Beachwalk.
(TB/JM) PD

Previous Action (For City Clerk Use Only)