

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: February 12, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS POTENTIALLY MOVING THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION ("PSCD") FROM UNDER THE AUSPICE OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT BACK TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Public Safety Communications Division (PSCD) remain under the auspice of the Fire Department. Since the division's transfer in 2018, the PSCD has evolved into a nationally recognized leader in emergency communications, achieving triple Accredited Center of Excellence (ACE) accreditation twice, with a third accreditation expected in April 2025. Globally, fewer than thirteen (13) 911-centers have attained this level of distinction. Under Fire Department leadership, the PSCD manages over 1,600 portable radios and maintains critical infrastructure for all city radio towers/sites, ensuring seamless communication for emergency services.

Additionally, a fully integrated backup center located at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) within Fire Station 2 provides critical redundancy for public safety operations.

The division handles over 250,000 calls annually, answering 97% of these calls promptly. Less than 3% are classified as priority 1 police emergencies. While the Fire Department provides administrative oversight, the Police Chief retains full control over police dispatch operations, including protocol management. Recent protocol updates, such as a reduction in police call-hold times, have improved response times and overall service efficiency.

Relocating the PSCD to the Police Department would risk disrupting this success, negatively affecting resource management, service quality, and interdepartmental coordination.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The PSCD transitioned to the Fire Department in 2018 to improve emergency response coordination. Since then, it has filled 95% of its budgeted positions, earned two triple ACE accreditations, and assumed management of critical communication resources, including portable radios and radio towers. This infrastructure supports police, fire, and medical response efforts across the city.

Although the Fire Department oversees overall administration, the Police Chief retains full authority over police-specific operations. Protocol updates and operational procedures are reviewed in meetings between PSCD staff and police leadership, with final approval by the Police Chief. In October 2024, a major update reduced the supervisory notification hold time for police calls from 10 minutes to 5 minutes to expedite responses to priority incidents.

ANALYSIS

Relocating the PSCD to the Police Department presents several risks:

- **Resource Disruption:** The PSCD's integration of radio communication management, including portable radios and radio tower infrastructure, could be destabilized by a departmental shift.
- **Service Quality Risks:** The PSCD has demonstrated operational success through triple ACE accreditation, adherence to IAED protocols, and consistent performance audits. Structural changes may hinder the division's ability to maintain these standards.

The division follows structured protocols tailored to emergency needs. Call-takers ask, "Tell me exactly what happened?" to gather essential information and dispatch appropriate resources. Since 2018, police protocols have been updated 18 times, with one key change in 2024 reducing call-hold times to enhance response efficiency.

Personnel certification is another critical component of the division's success. All PSCD staff are certified in police, fire, and medical dispatch and must complete at least 48 hours of continuing education every two years. Since 2017, PSCD personnel have completed over 11,000 hours of training, maintaining compliance with state regulations and national standards.

A performance audit was conducted in late 2024, of the 236 police calls reviewed, 98.72% were compliant with the reassurance to callers' policy implemented Oct 1, 2024.

Discipline	Total Number of Calls Reviewed	Number Of Emergency Calls Where New Agency Specific Reassurance Was Not Provided	Percentage Of Emergency Calls Where New Agency Specific Reassurance was Provided
Fire	104	4	96.15%
Medical	130	9	93.08%
Police	236	3	98.72%

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

NA

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?

(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

The Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on .

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

NA

CONCLUSION

The Public Safety Communications Division is essential to Miami Beach's emergency response system, meeting the highest national and international standards through its triple ACE accreditation. Under Florida Statute 365.171, which mandates a coordinated emergency

communications plan, the PSCD has effectively managed over 250,000 calls annually, maintained 97% of call response rates in the excellent category, and provided seamless communication through 1,600 portable radios and multiple radio towers. Its integrated backup center at Fire Station 2 ensures operational continuity during system disruptions.

Relocating the division would risk destabilizing this success, undermining compliance with state requirements, and reducing the reliability of emergency services. The City recommends maintaining the current structure to provide the best possible service to Miami Beach residents by preserving the integrity and efficiency of the PSCD's world-class communication network.

Applicable Area

Citywide

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

Yes

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

Fire

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Alex Fernandez

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Moving PSCD to PD