



# Memorandum

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Date: August 14, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers

From: Rey Valdes  
City Manager

Department: Carlos Arroyo  
Public Works Director

Subject: **Designation of Public Works Employees as First Responders**

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## **Introduction**

The Public Works Department's (PWD) respectfully requests that the Mayor, and the City Councilmembers approve a resolution supporting the designation of Public Works employees as First Responders.

## **Background**

In 2003, President George W. Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5) in which a Public Works response to emergencies and disasters was recognized as an absolute necessity, and the Federal government was directed to include Public Works in all planning and response efforts. Public Works First Responders are as critical to first response as public safety personnel. Public Works First Responders tackle emergency interruptions and are prepared to intervene when there is a natural disaster by responding rapidly and understanding the importance of the role they play. When these emergencies happen, Public Works employees act as First Responders by deploying to clear roadways for public safety responses, handle hazards on the right-of-way, and help to restore the community to a sense of normalcy. Public Works professionals are often the first on the scene and the last to leave the scene of all kinds of disasters. The efforts of Public Works First Responders represent an essential function protecting our citizens and communities that no other agency provides.

The American Public Works Association (APWA) established a First Responders Task Force as strategic initiative to be the voice of Public Works. While Police, Fire, and EMS are often the three most recognized first responders, Public Works is also often silently there by providing vital support to emergency response partners, helping protect essential services, and restoring those services following an emergency.

The APWA Florida Chapter President, Mr. Mark Collins, has established a First Responders Task Force to start working on making all Public Works professionals voices heard in Tallahassee. This follows various national and state awareness initiatives that are already in place, such as:

- In 2003, President George W. Bush issued Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8) officially recognizing Public Works as first responders.
- In 2010, Mississippi, under House Bill HB664, recognized Public Works professionals as first responders.
- In 2017, the APWA Board of Directors approved the adoption of a national “Public Works First Responder” symbol to use throughout North America to identify Public Works personnel and acknowledge their federally mandated role as first responders.
- In 2019, the US Senate passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 15 (S.Com.Rex.15), “Expressing support for the designation of October 28, 2019, as Honoring the Nation’s First Responders Day”. Public Works is specifically included.
- In 2022, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu signed SB325 into law, formally recognizing Public Works employees as first responders.
- In 2022, New Hampshire passed HB536, “An Act relative to death benefits for Public Works employees killed in the line of duty, and relative to workers’ compensation offsets for certain retirement system benefits”.
- In 2022, the City of Aventura adopted Resolution No. 2022-04, designating Public Works employees as first responders.

In order to continue with this effort, the City’s PWD respectfully request that the Mayor and the City Councilmembers approve a resolution supporting the designation of Public Works employees as First Responders. This support resolution will eventually help with a formal recognition from the State of Florida.

### **Procurement**

N/A

### **Fiscal Impact:**

There is currently no fiscal impact associated with this request.

### **Strategic Plan Alignment**

This item follows the Public Safety strategic initiative of the City’s Strategic Plan.

**Recommendation**

The City's Staff respectfully requests that the Mayor and City Councilmembers approve a resolution supporting the designation of Public Works employees as First Responders.