



STOKES WAGNER

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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## City of Miami Beach Requires Panic Buttons– Here's How to Comply

Last year the Miami Beach City Commission passed a law requiring all hotels within the City of Miami Beach to provide certain employees with panic buttons by **September 15, 2019**. Modeled after Chicago's 2018 safety-button ordinance, the new law applies not only to housekeepers or room attendants but also to minibar attendants and room service servers. Will your property be ready?

**How to Comply with Ordinance No. 2018-4207:** The law requires hotels to:

- Provide "safety button or notification devices to each hotel or hostel employee that is a **room attendant, housekeeping attendant, minibar attendant, or room service server**" at no cost to the employee.
- Place a "plainly visible sign" inside of each guest room, written in a font size of no less than 14 points, that states the following:

**For the protection of our employees, this establishment provides safety buttons or notification devices to its room attendants, housekeeping attendants, minibar attendants, and room service servers, in compliance with Chapter 62, Article VI of the Code of the City of Miami Beach.**

- Submit an affidavit with the annual renewal of the hotel's city business tax receipt, stating that the hotel is in compliance with the ordinance.

### What Type of Safety Buttons Are Permitted?

The ordinance is silent on whether the safety button requires only an audible alarm that does not identify the exact location of the employee, or whether the safety button must include GPS location tracking. Last week, the City of Miami Beach confirmed that GPS tracking is required and that a safety button that provides only an audible alarm does **not** comply with the ordinance. With only one month left to comply, this news may come as a surprise to hotels which have already purchased alarm-only safety buttons. Despite this

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recent update, some hotels on the beach have opted to move forward with audible-alarm buttons in light of the ordinance's lack of specificity.

**Who Will Enforce the Ordinance?**

The City's department of code enforcement will enforce the ordinance but will only respond to complaints about a hotel's noncompliance—it will not proactively inspect hotels. If a violation is found, the enforcement officer will issue a notice to the hotel that includes the following information:

- Description of the violation,
- Amount of the fine,
- Instructions and due date for paying the fine, and
- Explanation of the administrative appeal procedure.

A hotel found to be in violation of the ordinance will be subject to various penalties:

- First offense: written warning
- Second violation within preceding six months: civil fine of \$500.00
- Third violation within preceding six months: civil fine of \$1,000.00;
- Fourth or subsequent violation within preceding six months: civil fine of \$2,000.00.