Memorandum

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Date: November 5, 2013

To: Honorable Jean Monestime
Commissioner, District 2

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

Subject: Response to Memorandum - Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Boat

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The following information is provided to you in response to your October 18, 2013 memorandum regarding Miami-Dade Fire Rescue's (MDFR) inability to provide assistance in a rescue effort.

On October 16, 2013, at 2:11 am, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue's Communications Center received a call from the United States Coast Guard Station Miami to assist with a search for missing persons as a result of a capsized boat approximately seven miles east of Government Cut. Initially, Air Rescue South (ARS) was dispatched from Tamiami Airport with two rescue divers. Shortly thereafter, Air Rescue North (ARN) from Opa-locka was dispatched with an additional two rescue divers. Our Communications Officer (CO) contacted the City of Miami to determine the status of their fire boat which we were told was not in service. The CO also contacted two of our stations to determine the availability of our rigid hull inflatable boats (RHIB's) and both stations confirmed this incident was outside the capability of this type of vessel.

Once on scene, the Flight Medic Captain on ARS made direct contact with the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard requested we provide divers to assist with a search of the capsized vessel. The Flight Medic Captain, who was the senior rescue diver on the scene, advised the Coast Guard that this type of dive was beyond the scope of their training. Both ARS and ARN then assisted the Coast Guard with a search to locate any survivors in the water until approximately 4:30 am.

There is no written agreement with the United States Coast Guard to provide rescue divers; Coast Guard helicopters are typically staffed with Rescue Swimmers who are trained to operate in open waters. MDFR is trained to operate in an overhead environment such as a submerged vehicle or capsized boat. However, our training is focused on lakes, canals, and coastal waters as opposed to the open ocean. Regardless of the type of dive, it is always the decision of the senior rescue diver to go or not go depending on the conditions at the time. This is a calculated decision that our personnel have to make every day. The decisions that were made on this call were not based on budget constraints but rather what resources were available and appropriate based on the nature of the call. Without a doubt, this was a tragic accident. Based on the circumstances surrounding this accident, I believe that MDFR responded in accordance with available resources necessary to assist in this rescue.

Should you wish to further discuss, please contact Deputy Mayor Genaro "Chip" Iglesias or Fire Chief David Downey.

c: Honorable Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa
and Members, Board of County Commissioners
Robert A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney
Genaro "Chip" Iglesias, Deputy Mayor
David Downey, Fire Chief, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue
Christopher Agrippa, Clerk of the Board
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor