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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **First Woman in Miami-Dade To Be Sworn in as Miami Beach Fire Chief**

— *A change-of-command ceremony is planned for July 31 at 4 p.m. in the  
Miami Beach Convention Center —*

**Miami Beach, FL** – The City of Miami Beach invites the public and media to attend a swearing-in and change-of-command ceremony on **Wednesday, July 31 at 4 p.m.** at the **Miami Beach Convention Center** (Sunset Vista Ballroom) for the first woman ever appointed fire chief in the history of Miami-Dade County.

Chief Digna Abello, a 19-year veteran of the Miami Beach Fire Department, started her career with the agency as a firefighter and worked her way up through the ranks — becoming the 14<sup>th</sup> chief in the agency’s history. The Miami Beach Fire Department is one of only slightly more than 1% of the 37,983 participating fire agencies in the United States that have attained the prestigious ISO Class 1 rating from the Insurance Services Office.

“We are very proud to be in a city that rewards leadership and hard work, and promotes from within when we have a deserving candidate like Chief Abello,” said Miami Beach Interim City Manager Rickelle Williams. “We look forward to making history as the first municipality in Miami-Dade County to appoint and swear-in a woman as fire chief.”

The Miami Beach City Commission unanimously approved Abello’s appointment on June 26, 2024. Abello replaces Chief Virgil Fernandez who retired after more than 10 years with the department and four decades of service with fire agencies in South Florida.

As a firefighter, Abello distinguished herself, rising to the rank of lieutenant with a focus on recruitment and administration. She was subsequently named division chief of support services, division chief of training and division chief of rescue — all three major divisions of the department. Prior to being appointed chief, she served as deputy chief of administration beginning in 2020, where she was involved in all significant department matters with Fernandez.

She holds a bachelor's degree in emergency management from Barry University as well as numerous certifications, including fire inspector, fire officer, fire instructor, National Fire Academy leadership certification, incident command system certification and accreditation manager through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

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