

# South Florida Seawall: When a Repair Triggers a Mandatory Code Upgrade

*What separates a seawall repair from a replacement in 2026 — and the 50% rule that can turn a repair into a mandatory elevation.*

POMPANO BEACH , FL, UNITED STATES,  
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South Florida Seawall, a licensed marine construction company serving Palm Beach and Broward counties, today published guidance to help waterfront owners decide between seawall repair and replacement — and to flag a code provision many owners do not know exists: a repair that crosses a defined threshold can legally require the entire seawall to be brought up to current elevation standards.



Why the decision is no longer just about budget

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In Broward and Fort Lauderdale, a seawall 'repair' that touches more than half the wall legally requires the whole structure raised to current elevation.”

*Alex Ray, South Florida Seawall*

Under Broward County Policy 2.21.7 and Chapter 39, Article XXV, both new and substantially repaired seawalls must meet the regional minimum — 4.0 feet NAVD88 by January 1, 2035, and 5.0 feet NAVD88 by 2050. Fort Lauderdale requires 5.0 feet NAVD88 now. A "substantial repair" is any work affecting more than 50 percent of the wall's length, or any change in elevation along more than half of it. Once a repair crosses that line, it is no longer treated as a repair: the wall must be brought to the applicable NAVD88 elevation, which for an under-height wall means raising or replacing it rather than patching. A

citation triggers the same obligation, with 365 days to design, permit, and build. Palm Beach County is a patchwork — Delray Beach requires 4.2 feet NAVD88 for new construction, others vary — so the trigger must be confirmed property by property.

## When repair is the right call

Repair is often right when damage is isolated and the structure is sound: cap cracking, a spalled panel, surface scaling, or early soil voids fixable with polyurethane injection. Three failure modes signal a wall is past repair. Tieback corrosion: the steel anchor rods sit in saltwater-saturated soil, last 20 to 30 years, and pull the wall waterward when they fail. Toe scour: current and prop wash strip sediment from the base until the footing loses support and the bottom pivots forward. Cap or panel separation and through-cracking: the structural section itself, not just the surface, is gone. When two or more appear along a meaningful length, replacement is usually the sounder call.

## The 2026 cost crossover

In today's South Florida market, targeted repairs run roughly \$100 to \$600 per linear foot by failure mode, while full replacement to code commonly runs \$1,500 to \$3,500 per linear foot once FDEP and, where applicable, Army Corps permitting, water depth, soil, and access are factored in; deep water, oceanfront exposure, and barge access sit at the top. The decision turns on two numbers. The ratio: when repair approaches half the cost of replacement, replacement is usually the better capital decision, because each repair degrades the adjacent structure and a patched wall rarely outlasts 15 years, versus 30 to 50 for an engineered replacement. The calendar: local review takes weeks, but an FDEP Joint Coastal or Environmental Resource Permit can take six to twelve months — reason enough to decide early rather than under a citation clock.

## What the evaluation determines

South Florida Seawall's repair-or-replacement evaluation puts a number and a code status on the decision: condition of cap, panels, tiebacks, and toe; an approximate elevation reading against the applicable NAVD88 minimum; whether the needed scope crosses the substantial-repair threshold; a side-by-side repair-versus-replacement cost range; and the permitting path. It is provided at no cost and no obligation, and for HOAs and condominium boards it also covers reserve-study and phased-budgeting implications. It is available across Palm Beach and Broward counties, from Boca Raton to Fort Lauderdale.

About South Florida Seawall: South Florida Seawall headquartered in Pompano Beach, Florida. It holds Florida Certified General Contractor and Specialty Marine Contractor licenses and is an authorized dealer for AMF Marine and Hurricane [boat lifts](#). Services include seawall installation, elevation, and repair; docks; pilings; boat lifts; dredging; and barge-supported marine construction across Palm Beach and Broward counties. More at [sfseawall.com](http://sfseawall.com).

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