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## Burbank, Glendale seek link

●Response system would allow safety departments to communicate across jurisdictional lines.

By Chris Wiebe

BURBANK — The future of a multi-agency response system in Burbank and Glendale is safe, even as Los Angeles County is pursuing a countywide network of its own.

Conflict arose earlier this year as it became apparent that Burbank, Glendale and four other cities participating in the Interagency Communications Interoperability System, known as ICIS — which allows public safety departments to communicate across jurisdictional lines — were competing against the county for federal funding.

While county officials are seeking money for a planned network — called the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System — local system participants are also vying for federal help to finance maintenance and upgrades for an infrastructure that has been in place since 2003. That bred uncertainty among legislators in Washington, D.C., as competing requests came in from county and local officials pursuing similar technologies with similar goals in the same area.

But last week, a contingent of local system participants traveled to the capital with Los Angeles County Fire Chief Paul Michael Freeman to better define the city and county's shared perspective.

The joint trip sent a constructive, positive message that the two agencies are working together, said Glendale Fire Department Battalion Chief Don Wright, executive director of the local system.

"I really felt that because we had Chief Freeman with us, that we were able to show, No. 1, the hard work we've done in the past, and No. 2 ... we are carrying the message that we intend to be part of a much larger regional network — we are not looking to be empire builders of the ICIS radio system," Wright said. "And I think that's been the common misconception for a while."

And the delegation's trip to Washington, D.C., gave city and county officials the opportunity to become acquainted with their counterparts, Freeman said.

"I felt that the trip was very positive," he said. "And I thought it was timely because it certainly was a personification of the cooperative efforts that are being undertaken here locally."

The common ground that local and county officials have reached means that municipalities can continue to use their local system and bring other agencies aboard, while also supporting the county's efforts to create a regional system, said Burbank Mayor Marsha Ramos, who was a member of the contingent that traveled to the capital.

"For the first time we are two trains, and we are looking to converge on the same path and literally link those two trains together so that all of our communities are served," she said. "And that is probably the most efficient and effective way to use our resources wisely."

For the local system, that means tapping federal funds to update existing technology with Project 25 compliance, which is the industry standard for public safety radio systems, Wright said.

"By migrating toward Project 25, we obviously would fit the mold of that standard, which would make it more likely that our investment would be reutilized by the larger system," he said.

To date, the six participating cities have invested \$59 million into the local system, which serves 11 square miles and 700,000 residents in Beverly Hills, Culver City, Montebello, Pomona, Burbank and Glendale.

"We're doing the best thing we can with dollars," Wright said. "We're staying as agile as we possibly can and ... we definitely will be a part of whatever a bigger network is."

The progress came as welcome news to Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, said Tony Bell, a spokesman for Antonovich's office. In March, Antonovich fielded concerns from the Burbank City Council that pursuing a countywide system could eclipse strides already made on local systems.

The planning stages of the larger, countywide network are underway, with county officials working closely with the cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach to release a report at the beginning of 2008 about the details of the system, he said.

"Supervisor Antonovich's office is pleased that the county is working together with the cities to develop a coordinated strategy for public safety intercommunication for the region," he said