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Just in: a new ConFire mobile command unit

By Nick Marnell



Thanks to funding from a regional Assistance to Firefighters grant authored by Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District recently purchased a \$976,000 mobile incident command unit from LDV in Burlington, Wisconsin, a manufacturer of custom apparatus for law enforcement, emergency service and homeland security professionals.

The 55,000-pound vehicle, the largest and newest of its kind in Contra Costa County, will allow incident commanders to develop their action plans inside a large vehicle capable of radio communication, satellite uplink and other advanced technology.

"Until now, our incident commanders have had to function from the backs of their pickups," Fire Chief Jeff Carman told his advisory fire commission Feb. 27. He noted an incident last fall in which chief officers managed a multi-alarm fire using their iPads and cell phones through pouring rain.

According to Lon Goetsch, assistant chief of operations, the district will deploy the command vehicle in multi-alarm fires, major rescue operations or in a specialized incident that could go on for a long time, such as a chemical spill. "It may be used during a catastrophe at a major public gathering, like the Lafayette Food and Wine Festival, or at a serious vegetation fire," he said. In a major incident outside district boundaries, for example, in Moraga at Saint Mary's College, ConFire will deploy the unit at the behest of Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Stephen Healy.

Goetsch stressed that the command vehicle will be driven by trained, off-duty employees. "We will not compromise our on-duty firefighters," he said.

The unit will be housed at Fire Station 84 in Pittsburg, one of the few district stations with a large enough apparatus bay to store a vehicle that size. The mobile command unit will likely be placed into service by mid-March.

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