

# The 411 on the 213

## Area Code 'Donut' Split Spares Downtown

by Tom Bratter

The number crunch is on again. This Saturday, June 13, the 213 area code will shrink for the third time. But don't worry if you are in Downtown,

### WIRED WORLD

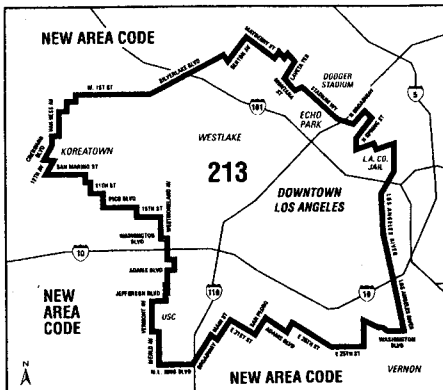
Wilshire Center or Exposition Park, you'll get to keep your present telephone number, including the only area code your prefix has ever known.

A new area code, 323, will form a "donut" around Downtown, affecting Hollywood, Boyle Heights, Highland Park, the Miracle Mile and Huntington Park. Even Dodger Stadium will adopt the 323, though USC and Exposition Park, including the Memorial Coliseum and the Sports Arena, will remain in the 213.

With similar splits in the 818 and 310 last year, there will now be six area codes in the territory that was originally 213. But further subdivisions may not be necessary, as the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) may allow future area codes in metropolitan areas to be overlaid, meaning two or more prefixes would share identical boundaries. Indeed the PUC recently approved an overlay in the 310: Beginning July 17, 1999, new numbers in the Westside and South Bay areas will begin with 424. Under the new plan, all calls currently dialed with seven digits in the 310 will need to be dialed with "1" plus 10 digits.

Public utilities regulators in California had been reluctant to allow overlays, leaving places like Los Angeles (and Chicago) carved into geographic area codes much smaller than anyone imagined in earlier times.

The 213 changes will affect hundreds of thousands of people, though Downtown



Downtown will retain the 213 area code, while the 323 will form a "donut" in surrounding communities.

business owners are obviously relieved that they do not have to spend thousands of dollars reprinting business cards and other stationery with a new area code. To ease the transition when trying to dial from Downtown to, say, Silver Lake, the 213 will still function for seven months. But the grace period is scheduled to end January 16, 1999, at which time all calls to the area will function only with the 323.

The need for new numbers stems from the ever-expanding reliance on pagers, fax machines, computer modem, cellular phones and other number users beyond traditional telephones. When the century turns, California will have at least 32 area codes. San Francisco's 415, having shrunk five times and with 10 area codes where once there was but one, will remain the champion splitter in North America.

Now, with 213, 818, 310, 562, 626, 323, and the coming 424, Los Angeles will have two more area codes than the five it originally took to cover the entire state.

CALIF. V.I.F. TELEPHONE AREA CODES