

Oakland police say FBI statistics don't tell full story on local crime

The fact that crime went up last year in Oakland County — while decreasing statewide — prompted a wide range of responses from area police agencies.

"Some police officers said the statistics were basically accurate and encouraging.

"Others said they were misleading — needlessly causing alarm in some cases and prompting false security in others.

Still others said the statistics were incomplete . . . or even wrong — although not significantly.

Oakland crime up

Statistics contained in the Michigan Annual Crime Report released by the state police indicate that crime across the state dropped by 6.7 percent, while serious crime in Oakland County jumped 5.6 percent.

But that doesn't tell the complete story, according to Southfield Police Chief Joseph Thomas, who insists his community and most others in Oakland County are secure.

Southfield, for example, had 35 rapes last year, a figure that Thomas said is misleading.

"Most of rapes or sexual assaults are committed by people who know the victims," he said.

"That's bad. But rapists aren't jumping out of the bushes attacking strangers."

Southfield recorded 924 aggravated assaults. But Thomas noted many of them are incidents of domestic violence.

Domestic assaults are serious, but figures about them can be misleading.

"Serious crime in Southfield is down 9.8 percent compared to the previous year," he said. "But because we have a lot of innocents (up 39 percent over 1996), the overall crime rate is up."

Some of that higher crime rate is a reflection of the city's prosperity, Thomas said. "If somebody wants to steal a good cell phone, or a good stereo system, they come to Oakland County."

Farmington Hills police Chief William Dwyer said his city's statistics are misleading if viewed in a vacuum. The city had 13 rapes in 1997, he noted, compared with nine in 1996 and 14 in 1995.

"Even on sexual assault is too many," he said. "But when you look at the number of rapes last year compared with previous years, there hasn't been a significant change."

Furthermore, the chief said, the statistics don't include significant details — like five of those 13 rapes being committed by a single person.

In Birmingham, deputy chief Richard Patterson said larcenies, 818 last year, were up about 40 percent compared with 1997 — something that bumped his community's crime rate substantially.

But many of those thefts could have been prevented, Patterson insisted. "Most happened between 3 and 6 a.m. in the morning, when somebody went through unlocked cars taking things of value," he said.

"Cell phones were popular," he said, but air bags and stereos were also stolen in considerable numbers.

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Phone 'cloning'
A bigger problem with cell phones, he said, was "cloning" of phone numbers. "I don't know the mechanics," Patterson said, but cloning involves using another person's cell phone number to make fraudulent long distance phone calls on that person's bill.

Overall, however, the crime statistics reflect a fairly accurate image of Birmingham, the deputy chief said. "There is a problem," he said, "but it would help if people locked their doors."

Overall, Birmingham is a pretty safe community.

Lt. Carl Fuhs of the West Bloomfield police said the crime figures reported for his community were "off, just like they usually are."

The actual number of West

Bloomfield burglaries in 1997 was 129, not 122 as reported in the crime report, Fuhs said. "That might be cause for alarm except that number was down in 1996 to 1995, he said. "The crime report numbers are usually close (to being accurate)," Fuhs said. "And sometimes the differences can be attributed to how crimes are reported. But in some cases, I don't know where they get those numbers."

Numbers off?
Asked if he might catch flack from state police, and the FBI, for calling into question the accuracy of their numbers, Fuhs was casual. "They know it," he said.

Crime statistics are very important in West Bloomfield, he said, as a public concern — and a source of pride. "In 1994 were among the safest communities with 50,000 residents (ninth, nationally)," he said. "We're still close to that. But that's one reason we keep good figures."

Thieves in Troy — home of Somerset Collection and other prime shopping areas — are getting more sophisticated, according to police Chief Charles Craft. His city recorded 2,658 larcenies in 1997, compared with 2,691 in the previous year.

But those numbers don't reflect, he said, the trend away from simple purse snatchings to more advanced thievery like credit card fraud. "We get our share of air bag and cell phone thefts," said Craft. "But some thieves are turning to embezzling, retail fraud or credit card fraud."

"Those crimes are more profitable," he said, "and there is less likelihood of being caught."

Police Chief Ted Glynn of Rochester — which had a total of 250 crimes reported — said the stats "are pretty close" as far as his community is concerned.

"We have some changes from year to year," he said. "But Rochester is a very safe community."



Craft

Dwyer



Thomas

Meadow Brook board adds new members

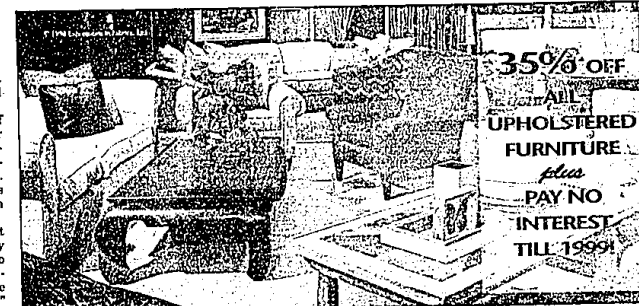
Nine Detroit area business and community leaders were recently appointed to Meadow Brook Theatre's 20 person advisory board. The theatre, located on the campus of Oakland University, is Michigan's largest non-profit professional resident theatre.

New members of the Meadow Brook Advisory Board are: Michael Bahn president, MIS International, Richard Borghi, executive vice president, Advance Accessory Systems; Jack Caernite, senior vice president, National Bank of Detroit; Charles Fisher, president, Chrysler Division Lear Corporation; Richard Gabrys, vice chairman, Deloitte &

Touche and William Halling, chief executive officer, Detroit Economic Club.

Also appointed were: Robert McEwen, managing director, Shandwick; Lisa Miller, vice president of payroll, Hilling and accounts receivable, Kelly Services and Dominic Pangborn, chief executive officer, Pangborn Design.

The Meadow Brook Theatre Advisory Board is comprised of community and corporate leaders selected because of their interest and commitment to the theatre. The board assists the theatre's fund raising activities and providing a network into the resources of the greater community.



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