

Hoover, Alabama sees 2008 drop in overall crime but an increase in burglaries, drug offenses

Burglaries, drug offenses spiked, however

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The city of Hoover experienced an 8 percent drop in major crime categories in 2008 from the previous year, while the number of burglaries and drug offenses increased, according to statistics released Wednesday by the Police Department.

Overall, 5,124 crimes were reported in 2008 in 21 categories. That number dropped to 4,921 after the department's investigation determined 203 of the reported crimes were unfounded.

In 2007, police said, 5,523 crimes were reported, but 188 were deemed unfounded, dropping the number to 5,335.

Police Chief Nick Derzis said Wednesday he was pleased with the decrease in the 2008 numbers.

"I don't think it's a coincidence that they look good," Derzis said. "We work very hard on patrol and investigations. We work very aggressively, and I think it pays off."

The number of homicides in Hoover, a city of 72,596 residents based on the latest census estimates, remained the same for 2007 and 2008. In 2008, two of the homicides were categorized as murder and the other was a traffic fatality. Arrests were made in the cases.

Some crimes increased, including burglary, which was up 18 percent. There were 441 burglaries reported in 2008, and 373 in 2007.

Hoover Police Capt. Jim Coker speculated the increase in burglaries could be attributed to the economy and people not locking their homes or businesses.

Drug offenses also increased 21 percent, with 505 reported in 2007 and 612 reported in 2008. The number of reported cases of receiving stolen property also rose, from 28 in 2007 to 33 in 2008.

Coker said Wednesday the department also works to give city residents an accounting of crime by tracking how many reported were real or unfounded after investigation, meaning they were either false reports or the alleged victim would not talk to detectives.

Coker said detectives take every crime report seriously. "Every one is investigated as if it did indeed occur, especially in the case of rape victims."

The number of sex offenses involving force dropped 32 percent in 2008 from 2007. There was also a 13 percent drop in the number of robberies.

Hoover is the only city in Alabama to use the National Incident-Based Report System, which is gradually replacing the Uniform Crime Reports system as technology improves. The city earlier was granted a waiver by the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center to submit crime data directly to the FBI. Other law enforcement departments in the state send monthly crime reports to ACJIC, which sends them to the FBI.

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Crime	2007	2008	Change
Arson	1	2	▲ 100%
Homicide	3	3	— * 0%
Assault	862	868	▲ 0.7%
Forcible Sex Offense	31	21	▼ 32%
Robbery	71	62	▼ 13%
Kidnapping, Abduction	12	5	▼ 58%
Burglary	373	441	▲ 18%
Motor Vehicle Theft	155	120	▼ 23%
Other Theft	1,955	1,766	▼ 10%
Buying, Receiving Stolen Property	28	33	▲ 18%
Drug Offense	505	612	▲ 21%
Counterfeiting, Forgery	149	101	▼ 32%
Embezzlement	97	80	▼ 18%
Extortion, Blackmail	0	3	N/A
Fraud	357	323	▼ 10%
Gambling	1	0	▼ 100%
Bribery	0	0	N/A
Property Destruction, Vandalism	684	538	▼ 21%
Weapons Violation	43	45	▲ 5%
Pornography, Obscene Material	7	3	▼ 57%
Prostitution	1	2	▲ 100%
Total	5,335	4,921	▼ 8%
<i>*1 Homicide in 2008 is a Traffic Fatality</i>			