

2003 VERMONT CRIME REPORT RELEASED: TOTAL CRIME DOWN by 5%

The 2003 Vermont Crime Report was released today by the Vermont Crime Information Center at the Department of Public Safety. The Report contains an analysis of crime reported to law enforcement agencies throughout the State of Vermont during calendar year 2003. Crimes reported to state police, municipal police, sheriff departments, and other state law enforcement agencies are analyzed in the Report. Crime statistics are arranged statewide, by county, and by town.

Total Crime

The Report indicates that the total number of reported crimes declined by 5.4% from 2002. This is the third year in a row that the overall number of crimes in the state has declined. Though reported crimes were down, calls for service remained unchanged. Law enforcement agencies who belong to the Vermont Incident Based Reporting System (VIBRS), a statewide law enforcement computer network managed by the Department of Public Safety, reported 244,386 calls for service in 2003. Currently 80% of the crime reported in Vermont is reported by VIBRS agencies.

Though crime declined in most counties the crime rate did increase in Franklin, Orange, Orleans, and Windham counties. Windham County had the highest crime rate in the state in 2003 and Essex County had the lowest crime rate statewide.

Violent Crime

In order to gauge the level and types of violent crimes occurring across the Nation, the FBI tracks the offenses of murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Collectively these offenses form the Violent Crime Index. Preliminary figures reported by the FBI indicate that the National Violent Crime Index showed a decrease of 3.2% from 2002. The Vermont Violent Crime Index declined by 2.2% from 2002. Though there were double digit declines in forcible rape and robbery last year, homicides doubled from 7 in 2002 to 14 in 2003. Aggravated assaults also increased by 7%. This is the fourth year in a row that reported aggravated assaults increased in Vermont. Aggravated assaults involve very serious or life threatening injuries usually inflicted with some type of weapon.

The typical victim of a violent crime in Vermont tends to be a white, female, between the ages of 26 and 35. The victim and the assailant were known to each other in 85% of violent crime incidents. Assaults most frequently occurred on Sundays in the early evening at a private residence. Firearms were used as a weapon in 9% of aggravated assaults and other dangerous weapons such as knives and clubs were used in 27% of serious assaults.

Property Crime

The FBI also collects data on the crimes of burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft to measure the level of crimes occurring across the US that involve loss of property. Taken together, these offenses comprise the Property Crime Index. Preliminary figures from the FBI indicate that the National Property Crime Index was virtually unchanged from last year. However, the Vermont Property Crime Index declined by 5.4% from 2002. Burglary was down 14% from 2002. Larceny declined by 3% and Motor Vehicle Theft declined by 4%.

The total property loss in 2003 due to criminal activity was estimated by VIBRS agencies to be nearly \$ 20 million. Nearly \$7 million of that loss involved motor vehicle theft. The typical burglary incident involved a residential target and was committed during the morning hours on weekdays. Burglaries tend to be committed by white males under the age of seventeen.