

# Area crime rate drops 10 percent

Crime & Criminals - 1990

6.6.98

## Santa Cruz County

- Violent crimes decreased 10.5 percent
- Property crimes decreased 10.4 percent

## Statewide

- Violent crimes decreased 7.9 percent
- Property crime decreased 6.5 percent

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**SANTA CRUZ** — The Santa Cruz County crime rate dropped about 10 percent last year, state officials announced Monday.

Overall, violent and property crimes in the county and state were down in 1997, and law-enforcement officials attribute the decline to a beefed-up force, community partnerships and the "three-strikes law."

"Although we are still quite busy, we

are doing our job differently," said county sheriff's spokesman Deputy Kim Allyn. "Law enforcement stayed the same for many years, and with the advent of community policing, we have created a bridge with the community we serve. We have been able to effectively confront criminality and efficiently deal with it. ... It is a collective effort."

During the past year, the population of Santa Cruz County grew slightly from 243,600 in 1996, to 247,200 in 1997, but the overall crime rate declined by 10.5

percent, based on the rate per 100,000 people. The total number of violent crimes — including homicide, robbery and aggravated assault — decreased by 10.5 percent, with 1,774 incidents in 1996 and 1,613 in 1997. Property crimes, such as burglary and car theft, were down from 2,954 in 1996 to 2,633 in 1997, a decline of 10.4 percent.

While it may be tempting to assume from the figures that the streets of Santa Cruz are safer, Santa Cruz Deputy Police Chief Jeff Locke said he has noticed lit-

tle change in the past year.

"I think it is about the same. Overall, it is safe in Santa Cruz," said Locke. "Santa Cruz does not have rampant crime. I think it is a credit to the community and to the law-enforcement officers here."

The following crime statistics for Santa Cruz County were compiled by Attorney General Dan Lungren's office and released Monday:

- Homicides were cut by more than half,

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## Crime

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with four reported last year, and 10 reported in 1996. Locke said homicide is difficult to quantify through statistics. There may actually be more attempts, but because the victim doesn't die, they are not counted as homicides.

- The number of forcible rapes reported in 1996 was 72, up from 71 the previous year.

- There were 250 robberies reported in 1997, and 276 in 1996. Most robberies are committed by repeat criminals, said Locke, who, like Allyn, believes the "three strikes" law has taken many career criminals off the street.

- Aggravated assault was down to 1,287 in 1997, compared to 1,417 reported in 1996.

- Burglary was down from 2,170 incidents in 1996 to 1,931 last year.

- The number of cars stolen was 752 in 1997, down from 784 in 1996. Locke attributes the decline to an increase in the number of car alarms, and said manufacturers are making it tougher to break into newer cars.

Both the Santa Cruz Police Department and the county Sheriff's Office have added patrol and community services officers over the past year. In the Sheriff's Office, Allyn said funding provided by the Board of Supervisors and the federal government allowed the hiring more deputies, added service centers, canine units, cops on school campuses and bicycle and coast patrols.

Statewide, the crime rate — measured as the rate per 100,000 population — declined in every category for the fourth straight year, according to the report. Last year, crime decreased 6.9 percent overall, the lowest rate in 30 years. The number of violent crimes was down by 7.9 percent. The report detailed the percentage decrease as follows:

Violent crimes: — 7.9 percent

- Homicide: — 13.3 percent
- Forcible rape: — 2.2 percent
- Robbery: — 15 percent
- Aggravated assault: — 4.2 percent
- Property crime: — 6.5 percent
- Burglary: — 5.8 percent
- Motor vehicle theft: — 7.3 percent