

Violent Crime Up 363 Pct.

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5/28/75

A "shocked" Sheriff Al Noren today released crime figures revealing that violent crime in Santa Cruz County increased a whopping 363 per cent from 1969 to 1974.

That figure means that a violent crime occurred in the unincorporated areas of the county nearly once a day last year, compared to once every five days in 1969.

There were 353 violent crimes — murder, rape, robbery and serious assault — in 1974. Five years before, there were only 64.

Those figures were compiled by the sheriff's department as part of its annual report for 1974, which is scheduled for release June 1.

Numerically, violent crime has jumped 452 per cent, while the population has increased 19 per cent, indicating a net increase of 363 per cent.

"I am shocked," Noren said today. "The figures are unnerving — I didn't think there would be that much increase."

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He added that violent crimes are the hardest type to prevent, because unlike burglaries and other property crimes, "they can happen anywhere."

According to the sheriff's figures, property crime has not increased significantly over the past five years. Such crime — burglary and theft — has increased 24 per cent, which is not much higher than the 19 per cent population jump.

Reacting to the crime statistics, Noren said the increase shows that criminals

feel they can escape detection, and even if they do get caught and are prosecuted, the "chances of severe punishment are very minimal."

He said in order to increase the chances of a violent criminal being arrested, citizens "must become more involved in law enforcement."

If they do not become more involved, he said, "we'll have to turn to a more repressive type of law enforcement with more cops patrolling the streets. I don't want it and I'm sure the public doesn't want it."

A first-time offender, people "I'm backing legislation which would require state know, prison sentences for people convicted of violent crimes where a term of imprisonment is used."

As for a recent study by the Bureau of Criminal Statistics indicated figures that in Alameda, San Francisco and Los Angeles counties, "38 per cent of those convicted could have received probation or probation instead of state prison sentences," Noren said.

He said when criminals feel that they probably won't

get caught, and even if they do they won't go to the state prison, "there is not much of a deterrent."

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