

Crime rates drop in last decade

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Crime in Liberal by Year										
Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
All Crime	5	5	8	6	9	7	6	2	1	1
per 100,000	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	1.0	0.5	0.5
Murder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sexual Assault	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Aggravated Assault	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Domestic Violence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Armed Robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Auto Theft	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Motor Vehicle Theft	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
City and County of Inmate Services (CIS)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Chart provided by Liberal Police Department, posted at www.city-data.com/city/Liberal-Kansas.html.

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times In the middle part of the last decade, Liberal's crime rate was high, so much so the city held the distinction of having the second highest level of per capita crime in the state per capita. Though he was not sure what Liberal's current standing was, police chief Al Sill did say crimes have dropped over the course of time.

The Liberal Police Department recently released its annual report, and while the report contains much information, one thing it does not contain is one of the factors for the drop in the community's crime statistics – the number of traffic violations local police issued in 2012.

"We have, over the course of years, taken a very progressive stance towards traffic violations," Sill said. "We have written a lot. We generally give quite a number of traffic violations."

Another factor the police chief pointed to is City of Liberal officials keeping equipment such as traffic signals and signs up to date and operational.

A total of 255 non-injury accidents were reported in Liberal in 2012, with 38 injury accidents. Compared to 2011, non-injury accidents were down nearly 12 percent, and since 2006, that number has been nearly sliced in half. Injury accidents did rise a little, with a 3 percent increase from 2011, but overall, those numbers have decreased almost 12 percent. Sill said this is part of LPD's goal to try to eliminate as many accidents as possible.

“Whether we’ll actually achieve that goal or not, as long as you’ve got a lot of motorists on the road, you run the risk of having a lot of accidents,” he said. “Our objective is to keep all those motorists operating in a safe fashion.”

Sill then focused on the other crime statistics, detailing the difference between Part 1 and Part 2 crimes.

“The Part 1 and Part 2 crimes are derived from national statistics throughout the country,” he said. “That is done so cities across the country can keep somewhat of an accurate record of their crime fluctuation.”

Sill said Part 1 crimes are also called index crimes, as these are the ones most generally accurately reported to police. The reason for that is due to the severity of the crimes, making them things people will most readily report.

There are two types of Part 1 crimes, personal and property. Sill said personal crimes include areas such as homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault and aggravated battery.

Part 1 property crimes consists of burglaries to dwellings, auto and commercial theft, theft of motor fuel and arson.

In 2012, 51 personal crimes were reported in Liberal, down nearly 4 percent from 2011 and more than half from 2006.

In 2006, more than 1,200 property crimes were reported to the LPD, and despite a slight rise in 2012 with 637 last year, that number has also been reduced by half in the last six years.

Sill then explained Part 2 crimes, which can include forgeries, batteries, identity thefts, criminal use of financial cards, criminal damage to property, graffiti, weapons, sex, narcotics, liquor and curfew violations, DUIs, disorderly conduct, flee and elude, criminal trespass and reckless driving.

Sill said Part 2 crimes are separated from Part 1 crimes because they are not as readily reported.

“People don’t generally go out and report a drunk driver or a weapons violation or a liquor violation or a narcotics violation,” he said. “Those are the type of crimes that aren’t always easily discoverable either unless there’s a proactive police approach to that or if somebody happens to report that violation and it’s investigated later on. You still have crime even though it doesn’t fall into those Part 1 categories.”

Nearly 1,200 Part 2 crimes were reported in 2012, a number which rose slightly from 2011. This was the second consecutive year those figures increased, but compared to 2006, Part 2 crimes are down about 25 percent.

Sill said, however, those numbers fluctuate greatly and are a bit misleading.

“The increase of those crimes is not a true indicator as to whether your crime rate has gone up or down,” he said.

One of the main issues of the recent city commission race was the number of officers employed by the LPD. Sill said those numbers have always been down from where they should be. He said Liberal currently has 30 officers and is authorized for 40.

“The goal is to increase our strength in numbers to get that back up to our authorized strength,” he said.

The police department also recently implemented new software to track crime stats.

“It’s called Spillman, which is our software that we purchased a couple years ago,” Sill said.

That technology was purchased through grant funds, according to Sill.

“Along with the sheriff’s department, the police department and our communications center, we went in and purchased this shared software system called Spillman Technologies,” he said.

Sill said the software is utilized to allow departments to share data with one another.

“It’s centered around a Computer Aided Dispatch system,” he said. “From that, we’re able to collect this data and use it to our benefit. Our municipal court recently has implemented a new software system that is integrated into our Spillman software. Any data we generate through the police department side is being made accessible to our municipal court in their new software.”

Sill said LPD is now in the process of joining the Seward County Attorney’s office with its software so the data can be utilized there.

“It’s actually very sophisticated,” he said. “It’s extremely beneficial to us, a lot more so than what our old system used to do. In doing that, we’ve also implemented computers in the car. The officers out in the field can access data through the software system via these computers.”

As for whether the new software played a role in the lower crime statistics, Sill said it is difficult to pinpoint any proven data to that effect.

“What that is providing the officers out in the field is valuable information they didn’t once have available to them without that,” he said.

Through the new software, Sill said field officers can learn of active warrants on potential suspects.

“They are able to readily see what in house information we have available on that particular person,” he said.

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