



The City of Pacifica contributes a regular column to the *Pacifica Tribune* to connect with local residents and keep Pacificans informed on issues that are of current interest in the City of Pacifica. Below is the submission for the September 2, 2015 edition of the *Pacifica Tribune*, in which Interim Chief of Police Dan Steidle talks about crime statistics.

Pacifica Tribune

September 2, 2015

Interim Chief of Police Dan Steidle

Interpreting Crime Data

On August 10, 2015, I presented the Pacifica Police Department Annual Report to our City Council. This report included crime statistics for 2014, and a comparison to the same data from 2013. While the report indicates an overall increase in crime, it is important to understand what those increases actually represent in terms of the types of crimes that have increased as well as the actual number of criminal incidents that have occurred.

Part I crimes, which include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and auto theft increased by 19% from 2013 to 2014. To understand what this data means in terms of safety to the average community member, we will break down those increases:

- Robbery- Up from 7 to 15 (Average increase of .67 occurrences per month)
- Sexual Assault: Up from 8 to 11 (Average increase of .25 occurrences per month)
- Aggravated Assault: Up from 51 to 65 (Average increase of 1.2 occurrences per month)

These types of crimes are often the most traumatic for victims and of most concern to law enforcement and community members. Viewing only percentage of increase in a crime category can be alarming, but once the actual increase in occurrences per month is viewed, it is clear Pacifica is not in danger of losing its reputation as a safe community. In fact, when viewing rate of occurrences of certain crimes in surrounding communities, Pacifica remains at the low end.

Property crimes increased in 2014, as is the trend in San Mateo County, and in the State of California. Increase in auto burglaries from 2013 (154 to 255) and larceny (207 to 255) represent the largest piece of the 19% increase in Part I crimes. While not considered as serious by most, these property crimes do affect the quality of life in communities and are considered a priority in continuing to address. With the AB109 Realignment of 2011, and the passage of Proposition 47 in 2014, criminals committing these “non-serious” offenses are spending less time incarcerated, and more time on the street committing further crimes of this type. While considered important to address, these crime numbers are also on the low end if compared to jurisdictions surrounding Pacifica.

The low crime rate in Pacifica is one that has been recognized by organizations that collect crime data and compare Pacifica to similar sized communities. In 2013, Pacifica was recognized as the 23rd safest city in California with a population of greater than 20,000. That same year, Pacifica was recognized as

the 90th safest city in the United States with a population greater than 25,000. Accolades continued in 2014 when Pacifica was listed as one of California's 50 safest cities.

Of importance in recognizing what works in keeping crime rates low is the continued partnership between the police department and the community. It is the two-way communication and commitment of both the community and the members of the Pacifica Police Department to keeping our city safe that makes the difference.

Traffic Control Concerns

In the past year, Pacifica has experienced an unprecedented number of traffic issues related to Highway 1. These incidents have raised questions regarding traffic control, and when it is appropriate to intervene with law enforcement presence during an incident.

Although serviced by the State of California, the area of Highway 1 just south of Westport Drive to the southern city limits is the jurisdiction of the City of Pacifica. As such, the Pacifica Police Department is the primary agency responsible for traffic collision investigations and traffic control in this area.

When deemed appropriate, the Pacifica Police Department will conduct traffic control on this portion of Highway 1. Sir Isaac Newton's Third Law of Motion states *"To every action there is always opposed an equal reaction."* While a rhetorical comparison, the same is true for traffic control. In a heavily congested area such as Highway 1, with limited or no alternate routes available to circumvent traffic in the midst of the backup, taking control of an intersection to wave traffic through creates heavy congestion on side streets, often congesting neighborhoods to an unacceptable level. Soon, there is no place left to wave traffic into, and the highway congestion remains. Alleviating one problem but creating a second is not always the best solution. I do understand that this, however, is of little consolation to the frustrated motorist who is simply trying to get home after a long day at work.

As we move forward, I have tasked a team of Pacifica Police personnel who specialize in traffic matters to create contingency plans for personnel to utilize in the event of a major incident, such as the Caltrans incident of August 3rd, and the fatal DUI collision that caused the Highway 1 closure on July 25th. These plans will be utilized for major events of long duration, or in the event of the rare, complete closure of a direction of Highway 1. In addition, we will continue utilizing social media venues such as Next Door and Twitter, as well as SMC Alert to notify our community members of serious traffic issues so that they may make informed decisions regarding travel.

Traffic issues are a serious concern for every community. The Pacifica Police Department is committed to addressing traffic issues in a responsible manner, taking public safety into consideration as a priority.
