

Fresno police focus on 15% crime rise

Fresno police are focusing on a surge in crime, up 15% this year from the same time frame in 2014, driven by a 32% increase in robberies — or 101 more than last year.

The figures were reported this week to Chief Jerry Dyer during the monthly Crime View session, where the chief reviews numbers with his command staff.

“I want to make sure we don’t become tolerant of crime in this city,” Dyer told his officers during the session. He directed them to pour more resources into tamping down the flareup, using special teams such as narcotics officers and auto theft detectives to bring the numbers down, with an emphasis on the robberies. He noted the danger of a robbery going bad and escalating into a murder.

There have been 414 robberies in 2015, 318 committed against individuals, largely during street crimes. Those include robberies committed with weapons such as firearms and knives as well as “strong arm” robberies committed with physical force. They took place in every portion of the city, with a big upsurge in the Northeast Policing District, which is the area north of McKinley Avenue and east of Blackstone Avenue. There were 108 robberies there this year, up from 60 in 2014, a record low. By comparison, 113 took place in the same time frame in 2013 and 118 in 2012, according to Lt. Donald Gross, the district commander.

The Shaw Avenue corridor between Fresno Street and Chestnut Avenue was a hot spot for that criminal activity, as was Blackstone Avenue. Most of the robberies occurred between noon and 8 p.m. There were also three robberies of PlayStation devices by people who posed as buyers on social media.

In the Southwest district, roughly south of McKinley Avenue and west of First Street, a hot spot for robberies was noted along Fresno Street between Belmont and Olive avenues from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. A trouble spot in the Southeast district was noted along Kings Canyon Boulevard and in the Northwest district around the Shaw corridor.

Among other numbers disclosed during the data-driven session:

- Homicides are down, from 23 in 2014 to 21 this year.
- There have been 40 shootings in the Northwest district, compared to 27 last year.
- Carjackings are up, from 12 in 2014 to 18 this year.
- Auto thefts have been cut by 179 from 2014.
- A surge in catalytic converter thefts erupted in May in northwest Fresno, where 18 were stolen from pickups in a six-day period. Lt. Jon Papaleo speculated that a crew operating in different parts of the Highway 99 corridor may have been responsible for the heists.

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