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February 5, 2008

NEWS RELEASE

2007 Adult Felony Criminal Prosecutions in Dakota County

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2007 involving **adult felony criminal prosecutions** handled by his Office. These statistics do not reflect the total number of crimes occurring, but reflect the number of felony charges filed against individuals within Dakota County in 2007. The County Attorney is responsible for the prosecution of all felonies committed by adults (this includes persons age 18 and over and any juvenile certified for prosecution as an adult) that occur in the County. According to Backstrom:

- The total number of **adults charged¹** with felony offenses in Dakota County decreased slightly (**1,891²** adults were charged with felony offenses in 2007, compared to 1,904 in 2006).

INCREASE/DECREASE IN ADULTS CHARGED WITH FELONIES (BY CITY/JURISDICTION)

Cities/Jurisdictions which showed an **increase** in the number of adults charged with felonies from 2006-2007 were:

- ↑ Inver Grove Heights (139 to 173)
- ↑ Mendota Heights (18 to 22)
- ↑ Rosemount (64 to 85)
- ↑ South St. Paul (106 to 132)
- ↑ West St. Paul (189 to 236)

Cities which showed a **decrease** in the number of adults charged with felonies from 2006-2007 were:

- ↓ Apple Valley (194 to 159)
- ↓ Burnsville (372 to 321)
- ↓ Dakota County Sheriff (228 to 220)
- ↓ Eagan (232 to 229)
- ↓ Farmington (55 to 42)
- ↓ Hastings (103 to 87)
- ↓ Lakeville (137 to 129)

CHARGES DROP BUT ILLEGAL DRUG USE CONTINUES AS TOP PROBLEM

Drug offenses continue to represent the largest category of cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office. The total number of defendants charged with drug offenses in 2007 represents approximately 33% of the entire felony caseload of the Dakota County Attorney's Office. (See the attached chart for drug trends in the past ten years). 618³ individuals were charged with felony drug crimes in Dakota County in 2007, compared to 663 the year before, a decrease of 7%.

Backstrom commented: "Illegal drug use in Dakota County and across our state continues to be an enormous problem. The dramatic increase in drug prosecutions in our community over the last decade is a sad reminder that Dakota County is not immune from the widespread problem of illegal drug use that we have in our nation. If you include all of the property crimes committed to finance illegal drug habits and the crimes of violence associated with the illegal drug trade, it is estimated that about 50% of all felony prosecutions in Dakota County are related to the sale or use of illegal drugs."

Backstrom indicated that methamphetamine continues to be the number one illegal drug problem in Dakota County. **330** individuals were charged with meth-related felonies in Dakota County in 2007, compared to 307 the year before (an increase of approximately 7%). In Dakota County, **6** meth labs were seized in 2007, compared to 9 in 2006. This is a significant drop, however, from the 28 meth labs seized just a few years ago in the County.

Backstrom commented: "While it is obviously good news that fewer meth labs are in operation today, over 80% of methamphetamine sold in Minnesota is smuggled into our state, most from Mexico. Meth use continues to be a significant problem in Dakota County, as it is across our state and nation. Approximately 17% of all felony crimes charged in Dakota County last year involved the sale, manufacture or possession of methamphetamine. If you add in all of the other crimes associated with meth use (i.e. theft, robberies, burglaries and crimes of violence), it is believed that meth is involved in 25-30% of all felony prosecutions in our community."

Backstrom noted that education of community members through Town Forums concerning the dangers associated with increasing use of methamphetamine has increased awareness by citizens which is important and must continue. In the last several years, meth forums have been held for the following communities: Burnsville, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul. Backstrom noted that prevention and public awareness of the meth problem is also a key project of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA). The past two summers, the MCAA had a booth at the Minnesota State Fair to make the public more aware of the menace of meth in our state and produced a 60-minute meth documentary which is available to schools and other groups by County Attorneys throughout Minnesota. *"To effectively reduce methamphetamine use, we need a coordinated strategy of enforcement, treatment and prevention, and everyone in the community needs to be aware of the extent of this serious problem,"* Backstrom added.

The illegal manufacture, distribution, and possession of drugs continue to negatively impact the overall public health and safety of our communities. Many drug related crimes are committed by individuals who themselves are addicted to drugs. Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom continues to work with Dakota County judges, Community Corrections, law enforcement, and other criminal justice professionals to identify and implement policies and procedures to more effectively and efficiently address repeat and non-violent drug offenders who demonstrate a willingness to address their chemical addiction. The goals of this collaborative effort are to resolve cases in a more proactive way, hold offenders accountable, provide needed treatment and reduce overall recidivism.

Backstrom also praised the continued efforts of the Dakota County Drug Task Force, which consists of officers from the Dakota County Sheriff's Department and police departments in the cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Savage. Backstrom commented: *"This coordinated law enforcement effort has been extremely effective in investigating illegal drug activity and identifying those persons involved in illegal drug sales or use. Continuation of the Dakota County Drug Task Force, which relies heavily on federal grant funding, is vital in combating the serious problems associated with the use of methamphetamine and illegal drugs in our community."*

DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH MURDER

Backstrom indicated that last year in Dakota County one individual was charged with **murder**, one individual was charged with manslaughter, and two individuals were charged with attempted murder. This was down significantly from the 17 murder prosecutions during the previous three years. *Backstrom commented: "Dakota County has historically averaged about three homicides per year (except in 2004 and 2005) and 2007 was consistent with this average."*

FELONY STRANGULATION CASES

Beginning August 1, 2005, it became a felony to strangle or attempt to strangle someone during a domestic violence struggle. Backstrom praised the new law, which resulted in 68 individuals being charged with felony domestic violence in Dakota County in 2007. Backstrom commented: *"Domestic violence is a huge problem in our society and strangulation attempts signify an escalation of the level of violence in these cases. Making these serious crimes felonies was the right thing to do and will appropriately hold these offenders more accountable and provide greater protection to the victims of domestic violence."*

OTHER CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

Backstrom indicated that felony charges involving **crimes of violence**⁴ in Dakota County rose dramatically to a new all-time high, rising to **565** in 2007 up from 519 the year before (an increase of almost 9%). The ten-year average (1998-2007) for violent crimes charged in Dakota County is 390 (see the attached chart). Of significant note:

- Felony stalking charges rose from 48 in 2006 to 70 in 2007 (an increase of 45%)
- Terroristic threats charges rose from 89 in 2006 to 112 in 2007 (an increase of 26%)
- Felony assault charges rose from 210 in 2006 to 235 in 2007 (an increase of 12%)
- Felony sex-related charges rose from 78 in 2006 to 87 in 2007
- Kidnapping charges rose slightly from 11 in 2006 to 14 in 2007

Backstrom stated: "While it is cause for concern that prosecutions for violent crime remain significantly higher than the 10-year average for these offenses in Dakota County, it is important to keep in mind that our violent crime rate is statistically quite low for the size of our County. Dakota County remains a safe community in which to live."

CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE / INJURY AND FELONY DWI'S

Backstrom said that two individuals were charged with Criminal Vehicular Homicide in Dakota County in 2007, one more than in 2006. Additionally, 11 individuals were charged with Criminal Vehicular Injury in Dakota County in 2007, compared with 16 charged with this crime in 2006. Also, felony DWI charges were filed against **72** defendants in Dakota County in 2007 (8 of these individuals were charged with their second felony DWI). A felony DWI occurs if an offender has previously been convicted of three prior DWI's in the last 10 years.

Backstrom said his Office coordinates enforcement and prevention activities with the Safe Dakota Coalition, made up of all Dakota County law enforcement agencies and area high schools, community colleges and organizations committed to reducing alcohol-related crashes. *Backstrom commented: "Drunk driving kills or cripples more persons each year than any other crime in America. We must continue to dedicate resources to raise the level of awareness of these dangers in our efforts to prevent these tragedies."*

In 2007, more than 500 persons were killed in motor vehicle crashes across Minnesota (an estimated 30% were alcohol-related). In Dakota County, 24 individuals were killed in 23 motor vehicle crashes (3 of these crashes were alcohol-related). *"This tragic loss of life and the debilitating injuries caused by crashes involving drunk drivers requires every effort we can make to prevent these tragedies from occurring," Backstrom added.*

AUTO THEFT CHARGES INCREASE

Backstrom indicated that his Office coordinates a multi-jurisdictional auto theft prosecution unit that pursues prosecution of offenders stealing cars in Dakota, Scott and Carver counties. The number of individuals charged with felony auto theft-related offenses increased from 94 in 2006 to **126** in 2007 in all three counties. In Dakota County alone, auto theft charges rose from 68 in 2006 to **89** in 2007. Backstrom indicated that part of the state grant funding this tri-county auto theft prosecution project includes prevention efforts. Prevention efforts included law enforcement training and distribution of auto theft awareness brochures at County fairs and other community events. Backstrom commented: *“Most cars stolen are unlocked with the keys left in them. To avoid falling victim to auto thieves, drivers need to take common sense precautions like locking their cars and keeping them in garages or more secure locations overnight whenever possible.”*

OTHER PROPERTY CRIMES

In reference to other **felony property crimes**:

- Welfare fraud charges rose from 125 in 2006 to 173 in 2007 (an increase of 38%)
- Burglary charges also rose from 128 charges in 2006 to 152 in 2007 (an increase of 19%)
- Robbery charges rose from 44 in 2006 to 57 in 2007 (an increase of 30%)
- Criminal damage to property charges rose slightly from 65 in 2006 to 70 in 2007
- Stolen property charges dropped from 96 in 2006 to 75 in 2007 (a decrease of 22%)
- Forgery charges were down slightly from 212 in 2006 to 206 in 2007
- General theft-related charges stayed the same at 402 in 2007

CRIMINAL APPEALS

Backstrom indicated that his Office was involved in filing or responding to 79 criminal cases in 2007, compared to 77 in 2006. Appeals involve significant staff resources but are necessary in efforts to insure the fair administration of justice.

Attached is a chart detailing felony level charges filed by the Dakota County Attorney’s Office in 2007. Also attached are charts comparing statistical information about adult felony prosecutions for the last decade. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at www.dakotacounty.us

If you have any questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

¹ Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

² Some of these defendants may have been charged more than one time with crimes occurring in separate behavioral incidents.

³ Some of these defendants were charged with crimes involving more than one illegal drug in the same or separate behavioral incidents.

⁴ Felony crimes of violence include: homicide (murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter), assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses, criminal vehicular homicide/injury and terroristic threats. The statistics referenced in this section reflect the number of felony charges and not defendants. A single defendant may be charged with more than one felony offense.

2007 ADULT FELONY OFFENSES

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	Drug Related ¹	Theft-Related & Defeating Security ²	Forgery Related	Welfare Fraud	Burglary	Felony DWI	Strangulation/Felony 5th/Domestic Assault	Assault Related/Drive-By Shooting	Terroristic Threats	Sex-Related	Stolen Property ²	Criminal Damage to Property	Fugitive From Justice	Robbery	Traffic-Related (Including Fleeing with no injury)	Stalking-Related	Public Health & Safety/Coercion	Possession or Use of Dangerous Weapons	Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury ⁴	Obstructing Justice, Escape, Public Corruption	Illegal Motor Vehicle Use ²	Kidnapping	Abuse/Neglect of Minor	Tax-Related	Deprivation of Custodial Rights/Support/Paternity	Homicide, including Attempted ³	Tampering With a Witness	Arson	Gang Crimes	Unemployment & Workers Comp Fraud	Campaign/Election/Voting	Food Adulteration	Gambling Related	TOTAL CHARGES ⁵	TOTAL DEFENDANTS	
Apple Valley	63	47	11	0	18	13	14	12	11	20	6	8	0	9	7	8	0	3	5	1	4	6	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	269	159
Burnsville	138	63	37	0	42	20	24	22	23	2	4	13	7	22	3	12	1	5	4	8	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	457	321
Dakota County Sheriff	75	20	6	172	6	11	5	3	4	5	9	3	28	0	11	3	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	368	220
Eagan	83	58	31	1	20	6	9	19	13	7	14	12	7	5	10	3	9	3	2	2	1	1	4	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	325	229
Farmington	11	8	3	0	6	7	4	9	5	2	1	2	3	6	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	71	42
Hastings	50	11	11	0	6	6	8	3	9	10	2	4	3	0	4	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	136	87
Inver Grove Heights	67	42	18	0	13	11	8	11	9	5	5	5	6	2	2	6	7	7	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	232	173
Lakeville	37	25	13	0	19	10	6	6	6	24	7	4	7	1	6	3	1	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	185	129
Mendota Heights	8	0	0	0	1	4	0	2	1	1	1	3	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	22
Minnesota State Patrol	15	5	0	0	0	14	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	32
Other Law Enforcement	17	2	2	0	4	0	0	5	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	24
Rosemount	40	11	6	0	5	10	10	5	8	0	3	4	2	0	6	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	117	85
South St. Paul	64	27	11	0	5	10	18	5	7	5	9	3	2	3	1	3	3	4	3	2	5	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	195	132
West St. Paul	91	83	57	0	7	8	16	10	13	5	12	6	1	9	2	5	0	0	3	4	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	340	236
TOTAL	759	402	206	173	152	130	122	113	112	87	75	70	68	57	56	46	30	30	24	23	20	14	12	8	8	6	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	2815	1891	

1. Drug-related statistics are reported under the city where the offense occurred (drug offenses occurring in townships are recorded under the Dakota County Sheriff or other). Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul Police Departments, and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

2. Auto theft-related charges are listed with Theft-Related, Stolen Property and/or Illegal Motor Vehicle Use offenses.

3. Homicide offenses include charges for murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter.

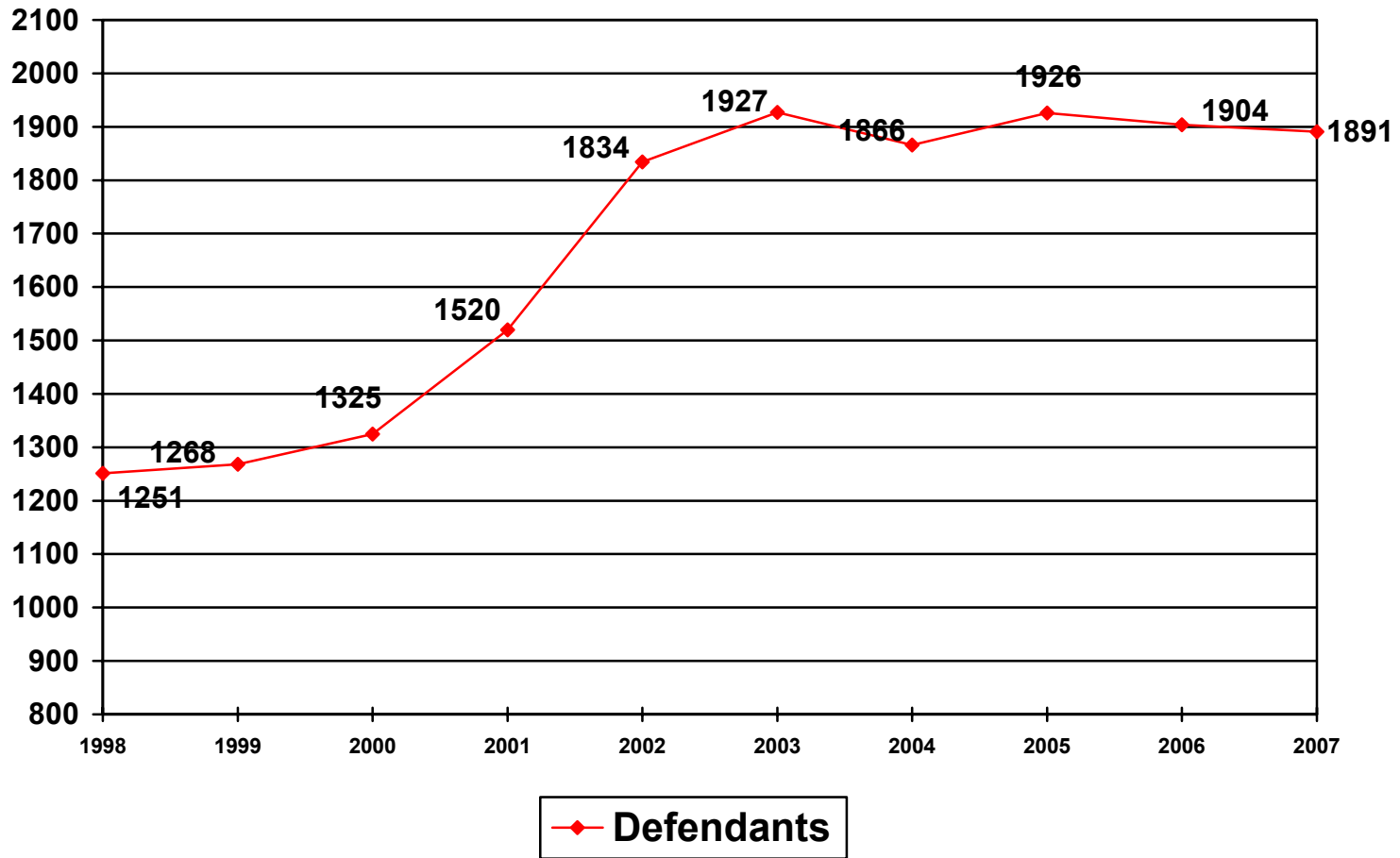
4. Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury includes Fleeing a Police Officer in a Motor Vehicle that Results in Death or Injury.

5. Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

Dakota County

Adults Charged with Felonies

1998 to 2007

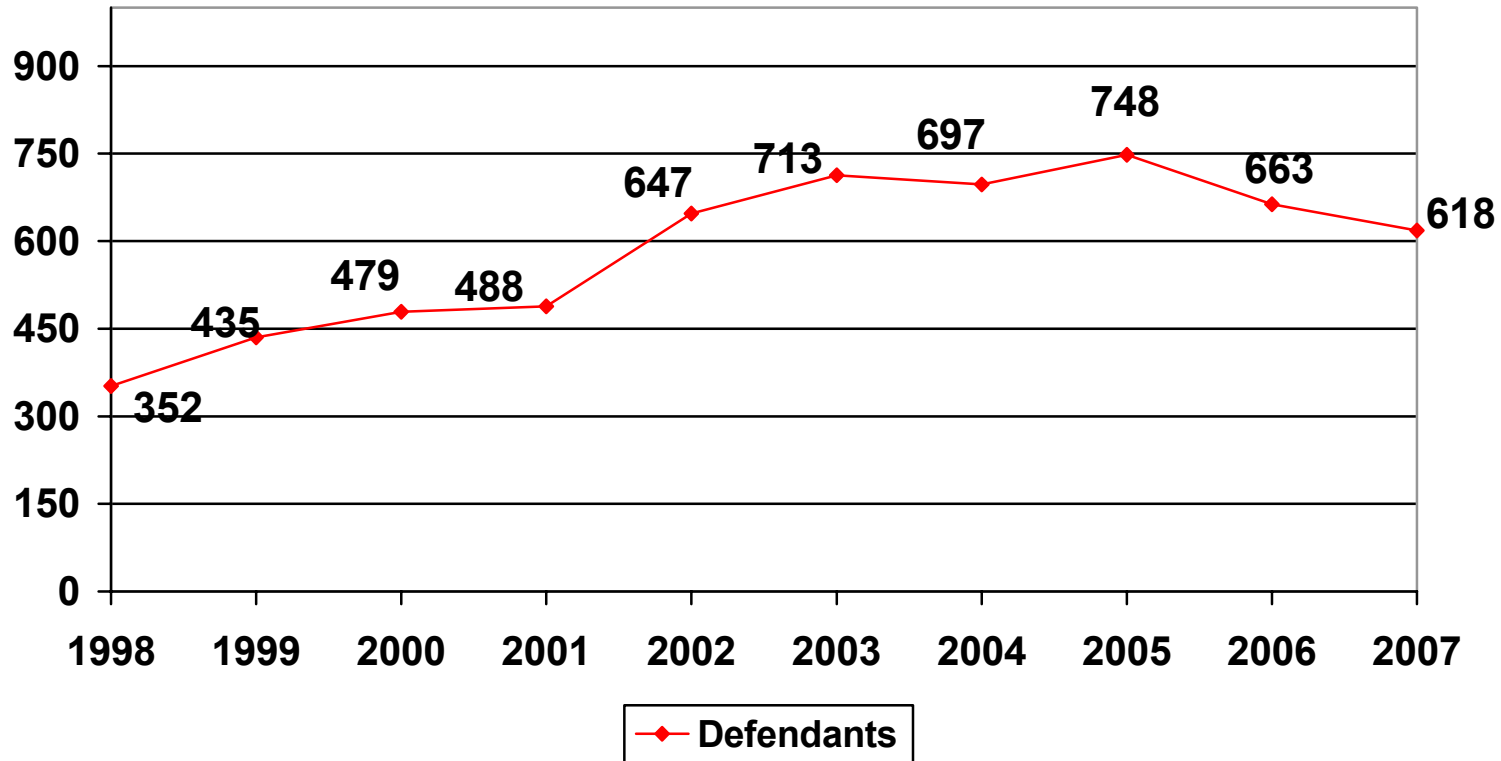


Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

Dakota County

Adult Drug-Related Defendants Prosecuted

1998-2007



Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

Dakota County
Violent Crime Charges Involving Adult Defendants
1998 - 2007

CRIME	TEN YEAR AVE. 1998 – 2007	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
MURDER ¹	Figures Not Available	3 ³	10 ⁴	7 ⁵	4 ⁶	2 ⁷
ATTEMPTED MURDER ¹	Figures Not Available	0	7	5	2	2
KIDNAPPING	13	11	15	18	11	14
SEX-RELATED	87	93	99	118	78	87
ROBBERY	38	29	27	40	44	57
FELONY ASSAULTS (includes felony strangulations after 8-01-05)	123	101	94	141	210	235
TERRORISTIC THREATS	81	73	82	105	89	112
DANGEROUS WEAPONS	30	36	48	24	24	30
CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE/INJURY	18	13	22	24	51	24
TOTAL²:	390	361	430	512	519	565

Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

¹Murder and Attempted Murder figures, which also include conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter (if any), reflect the actual number of persons charged with these offenses. The remaining crimes listed are based upon the number of felony charges filed.

²The total represents the number of charges of individual counts of violent crime (including murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter).

³There were three persons charged with homicide in 2003 in connection with three deaths, one that occurred in 2000.

⁴There were ten persons charged with homicide in 2004 in connection with six deaths.

⁵There were seven persons charged with homicide in 2005 in connection with six deaths, one that occurred in 1979.

⁶There were three persons charged with homicide/manslaughter in 2006 in connection with three deaths, one that occurred in 2005. Also, one murder/suicide occurred in Burnsville.

⁷There were two persons charged with homicide/manslaughter in 2007 in connection with two deaths, one that occurred in 2005.