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NEWS RELEASE

2008 Adult Felony Criminal Prosecutions in Dakota County

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2008 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 2008. 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 charged**¹ with felony offenses in Dakota County decreased by almost 9% (**1,729**² adults were charged with felony offenses in 2008, compared to 1,891 in 2007).

ADULTS CHARGED WITH FELONIES (BY CITY/JURISDICTION)

The following reflects felony charging statistics involving cases referred from individual cities and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office:

Apple Valley **increased** from 159 to **173**
Burnsville **decreased** from 321 to **295**
Dakota County Sheriff stayed **about the same** from 220 to **219**
Eagan **decreased** from 229 to **215**
Farmington **decreased** from 42 to **26**
Hastings **decreased slightly** from 87 to **82**
Inver Grove Heights **decreased** from 173 to **142**
Lakeville **decreased slightly** from 129 to **123**
Mendota Heights stayed **about the same** from 24 to **22**
Rosemount **decreased** from 85 to **69**
South St. Paul **decreased slightly** from 132 to **125**
West St. Paul **decreased** from 236 to **164**

ILLEGAL DRUG CHARGES DROP SIGNIFICANTLY --- BUT DRUG OFFENSES CONTINUE 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 2008 represents approximately 20% of the entire felony caseload of the Dakota County Attorney's Office. (See the attached chart for drug trends in the past ten years). **414**³ individuals were charged with felony drug crimes in Dakota County in 2008, compared to 618 the year before, a decrease of **33%**.

Backstrom commented: "While illegal drug use in Dakota County and across our state continues to be an enormous problem, this is the third year in a row in which we have seen significant drops in the number of individuals charged with illegal drug crimes in our community which is obviously a good sign. Illegal drug charges continue as the most frequently charged felony in Dakota County, as they have since 1997."

Backstrom indicated that methamphetamine continues to be the number one illegal drug involved in criminal charges in Dakota County, although the number of these charges dropped dramatically last year. **162** individuals were charged with meth-related felonies in Dakota County in 2008, compared to 330 the year before (a decrease of approximately 51%). Only **1 meth lab** was seized in 2008, compared to 6 in 2007. This is a significant drop from the 28 meth labs seized just a few years ago in the County.

Backstrom commented: "The control over the sales of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine enacted by the Minnesota Legislature in 2005 is one of the main reasons why the number of meth charges and labs have dropped so significantly in our community. However, large quantities of methamphetamine produced by Mexican drug cartels are smuggled into the U.S. and illegally distributed throughout the country each year."

Backstrom noted that **prevention and public awareness efforts** concerning the meth problem have also been a factor in reducing meth use. The Dakota County Public Health Department, in conjunction with the County Attorney's and Sheriff's Offices, have conducted a number of public forums and presentations over the last three years concerning the dangers of methamphetamine use. Meth prevention and public awareness has also been a key project of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA). The past three 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 showcased the 60-minute meth documentary which is available to schools and other groups through County Attorneys in 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 continues 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 Community Corrections, judges, 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. These collaborative efforts led to the establishment last September of Dakota County's first **Adult Drug Court**. The goal of Drug Court is to resolve cases in a more proactive way, holding offenders accountable with an emphasis on needed treatment and reducing 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 other illegal drugs in our community."*

DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH MURDER

Backstrom indicated that last year in Dakota County **2** individuals were charged with **murder** and **5** individuals were charged with attempted murder. This is consistent with the historic average of less than three homicides a year in Dakota County, which is a remarkably low number for a jurisdiction of almost 400,000 persons.

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 law, which resulted in **65** individuals being charged with felony domestic violence in Dakota County in 2008 (compared to 68 in 2007). Backstrom commented: *“Domestic violence is a huge problem in our society. Strangulation attempts signify how the level of violence in these cases is escalating. 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.”*

VIOLENT CRIME CHARGES ON THE RISE

Despite the overall drop in total felony charges in Dakota County last year, one alarming trend has continued, i.e., the rise in charges involving crimes of violence⁴. Violent crime charges rose to a new all-time high, rising to **646** in 2008 up from 565 the year before (an increase of 14%). The ten-year average (1999-2008) for violent crimes charged in Dakota County is 439 (see the attached chart). Of significant note:

Felony assault charges (including domestic-related) **rose** from 235 in 2007 to **242**
Terroristic threats charges **rose** from 112 in 2007 to **123**
Felony sex-related charges **rose** from 87 in 2007 to **110**

Backstrom stated: “While it is cause for concern that the number of violent crime charges 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 **2** individuals were charged with Criminal Vehicular Homicide in Dakota County in 2008. Additionally, **12** individuals were charged with Criminal Vehicular Injury in Dakota County last year. Also, felony DWI charges were filed against **55** individuals in Dakota County in 2008 (compared to 72 in 2007). A felony DWI occurs if an offender has been previously convicted of three DWI's in the last 10 years (among several other ways).

Backstrom said his Office coordinates enforcement and prevention activities aimed at reducing alcohol-related crashes with the Safe Dakota Coalition, made up of all Dakota County law enforcement agencies and area high schools, community colleges and other organizations. *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 Minnesota in 2008, at least **446** persons (final statistics are not available until May) were killed in motor vehicle crashes compared to 510 in 2007 (an estimated 35% were alcohol-related). In Dakota County last year, **18** individuals were killed in 15 motor vehicle crashes (so far one crash has been determined be 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 DECREASE

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 decreased slightly from 126 in 2007 to **115** in 2008 in all three counties. In Dakota County alone, auto theft charges dropped from 89 in 2007 to **51** in 2008. Backstrom indicated that part of the state grant that funds 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 stolen cars were left unlocked with the keys 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

Overall, the number of felony level property crime charges in Dakota County dropped from 1,078 in 2007 to **1,047** in 2008 (a decrease of 3%). Specific categories of **felony property crime charges** are listed below:

- Theft-related charges **decreased** from 402 to **368**⁵
- Forgery charges **increased** from 206 in 2007 to **225**
- Welfare fraud charges **decreased** from 173 in 2007 to **158**
- Burglary charges **increased** from 152 in 2007 to **178**
- Stolen property charges **increased** from 75 in 2007 to **77**
- Criminal damage to property charges **decreased** from 70 in 2007 to **41**⁵

CRIMINAL APPEALS

Backstrom indicated that his Office was involved in filing or responding to **64** appeals in criminal cases in 2008. Appeals involve significant staff resources but are necessary in efforts to insure the fair administration of justice.

PROBATION HEARINGS

Backstrom stated that his Office was involved in almost **1,700** hearings in 2008 (compared to 1,421 in 2007) to determine if an individual has violated the terms of their probation. These cases are staff intensive and are necessary to hold offenders appropriately accountable. Backstrom commented: *“Offenders who fail to follow the terms of their probation should have their probation revoked and further sanctions imposed.”*

Attached is a chart detailing felony level charges filed by the Dakota County Attorney’s Office in 2008. 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/attorney.

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.

⁵ This drop was primarily due to the increase in the minimum dollar amount of loss needed to charge a felony (raised from \$500 to \$1,000 effective August 1, 2007). Thefts between \$500-\$1,000 are now prosecuted as gross misdemeanors by City Attorneys.

2008 ADULT FELONY STATISTICS

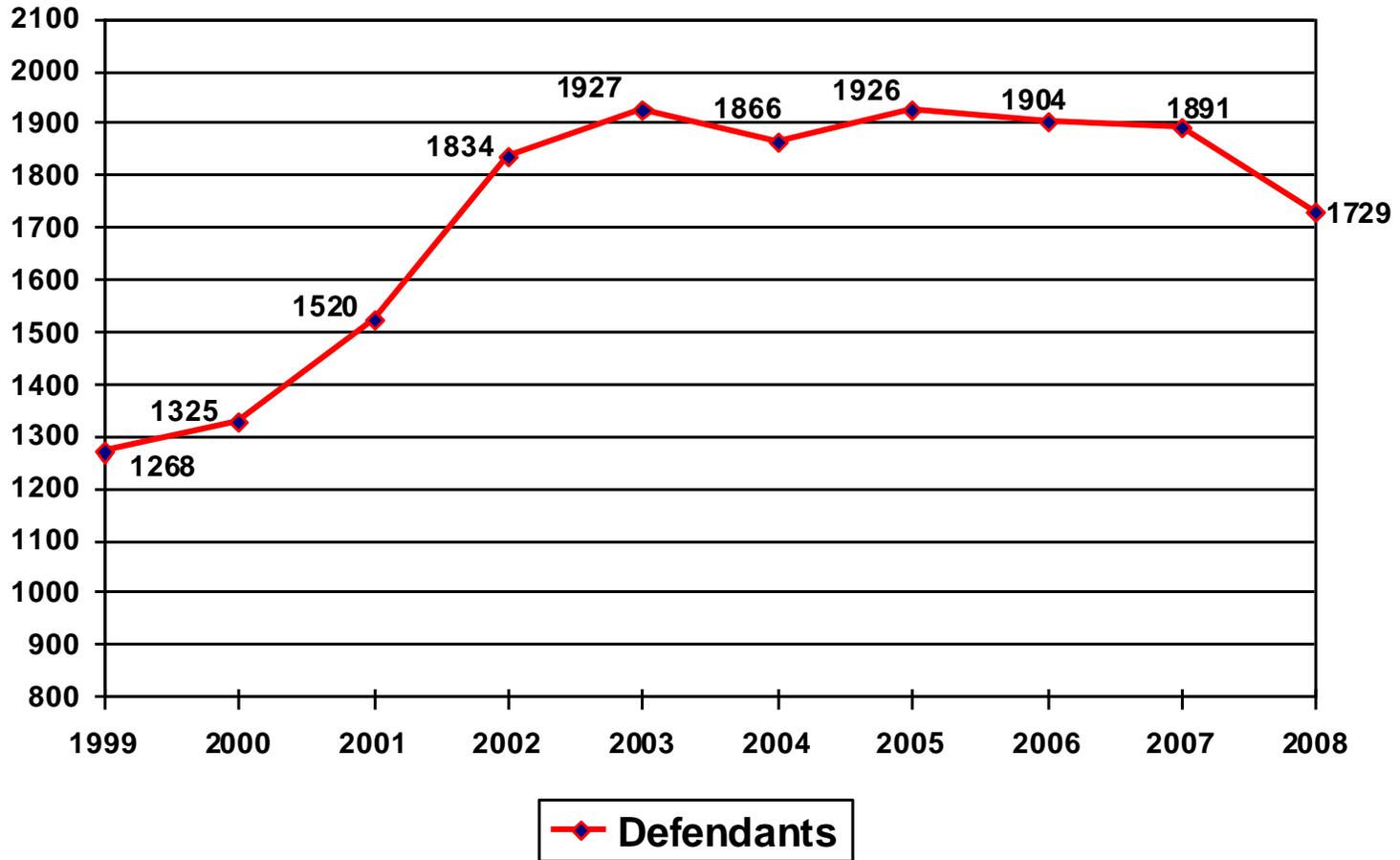
OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Drug Related ¹	Theft-Related & Defeating Security ²	Forgery Related	Burglary	Welfare Fraud	Strangulation/Felony 5th/Domestic Assault	Terroristic Threats	Assault Related	Sex-Related	Felony DWI	Stolen Property ²	Stalking-Related	Robbery	Traffic-Related(Including Fleeing with no injury)	Fugitive From Justice	Illegal Motor Vehicle Use ²	Public Health & Safety/Coercion	Criminal Damage to Property	Possession or Use of Dangerous Weapons	Kidnapping	Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury ⁴	Tax-Related	Obstructing Justice, Escape, Public Corruption	Homicide, including Attempted ³	Abuse/Neglect of Minor	Tampering With a Witness	Arson	Deprivation of Custodial Rights/Support/Paternity	Gambling Related	TOTAL CHARGES ⁵	TOTAL DEFENDANTS	
Apple Valley	34	46	33	16	0	18	20	15	23	0	7	5	6	6	2	7	5	3	3	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	255	173
Burnsville	94	67	66	48	2	27	27	18	8	7	15	24	16	9	8	8	11	4	4	1	4	0	4	6	3	3	4	2	0	0	491	295
Dakota County Sheriff	51	32	1	9	156	2	5	10	8	10	5	1	4	6	17	7	0	2	4	11	2	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	350	219
Eagan	71	70	28	26	0	15	21	11	17	15	15	1	6	5	2	8	7	10	3	1	6	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	343	215
Farmington	5	2	3	3	0	1	1	3	8	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	41	26
Hastings	24	20	9	1	0	6	3	7	3	7	10	9	0	4	5	4	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	120	82
Inver Grove Heights	42	14	19	17	0	15	7	10	19	11	1	7	2	8	3	4	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	188	142
Lakeville	25	28	9	17	0	7	7	12	8	8	7	7	12	4	5	3	0	5	6	3	3	0	1	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	185	123
Mendota Heights	6	14	1	3	0	1	7	2	3	2	2	0	0	1	0	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	49	24
MN State Patrol	6	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	8	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	25
Other Law Agencies	25	9	7	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	16	0	5	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	94	47
Rosemount	31	9	2	2	0	4	6	4	2	9	0	1	0	4	3	1	2	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	88	69
South St. Paul	50	13	6	20	0	21	11	8	6	2	4	11	0	4	4	2	2	2	3	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	173	125
West St. Paul	55	44	41	15	0	9	6	12	2	4	8	3	18	6	2	4	0	1	1	10	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	245	164
TOTAL	519	368	225	178	158	126	123	116	110	88	77	70	64	60	53	51	48	41	35	27	26	24	23	19	10	7	6	5	1	2658	1729	

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

1999 to 2008

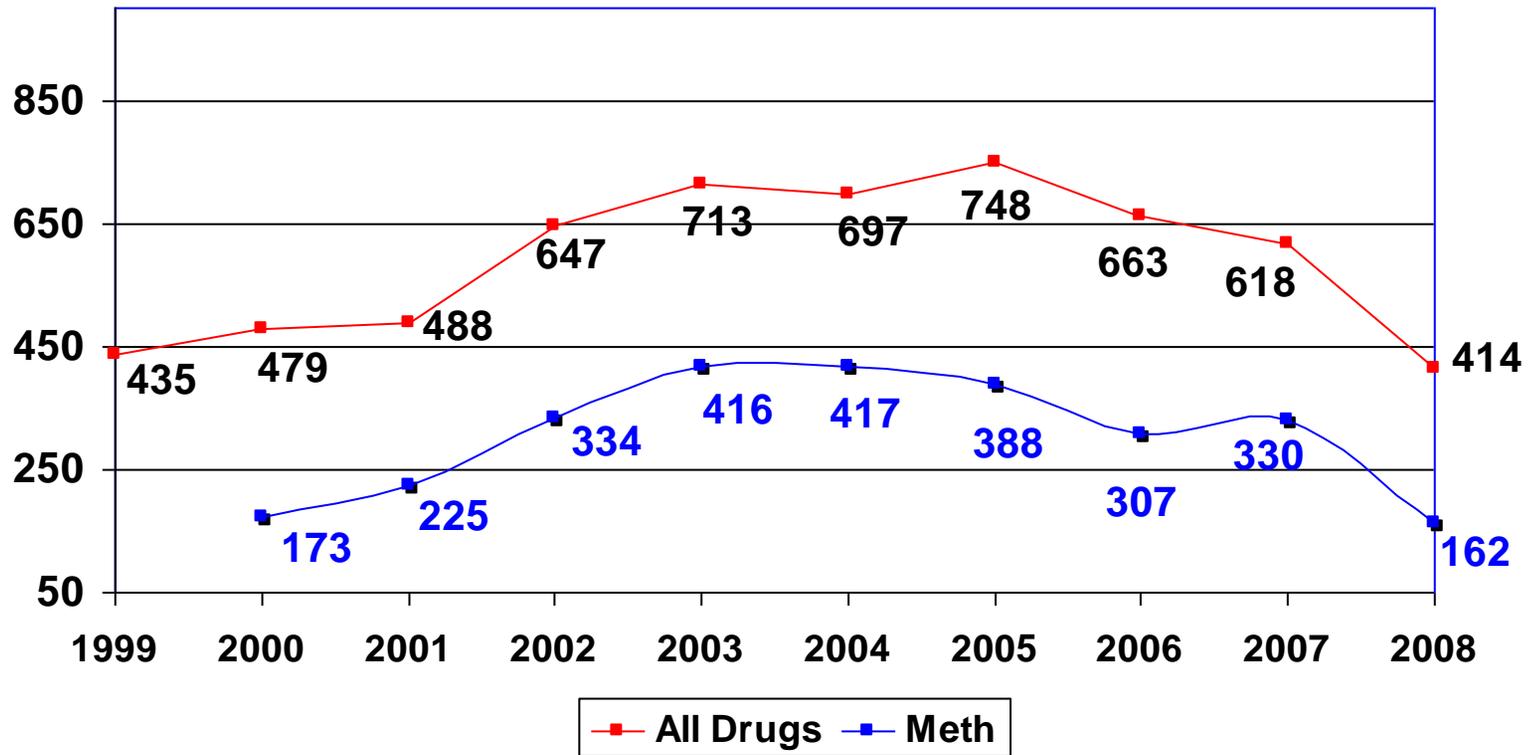


Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

Dakota County

Adult Drug-Related Defendants Prosecuted

1999-2008



Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

Dakota County

Violent Crime Charges Involving Adult Defendants

1999 - 2008

CRIME	TEN YEAR AVG 1999 – 2008	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
MURDER ¹	Figures Not Available	10 ³	7 ⁴	4 ⁵	2 ⁶	2 ⁷
ATTEMPTED MURDER ¹	Figures Not Available	7	5	2	2	5
KIDNAPPING	15	15	18	11	14	27
SEX-RELATED	92	99	118	78	87	110
ROBBERY	38	27	40	44	57	64
FELONY ASSAULTS (felony strangulations 8-01-05)	136	94	141	210	235	242
TERRORISTIC THREATS	88	82	105	89	112	123
DANGEROUS WEAPONS	32	48	24	24	30	35
CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE/INJURY	21	22	24	51	24	26
TOTAL ² :	439	430	512	519	565	646

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 ten persons charged with murder in 2004 in connection with six deaths. There were five persons charged with attempted murder.

⁴There were seven persons charged with murder in 2005 in connection with six deaths, one that occurred in 1979. One person was charged with conspiracy to commit murder, and four persons were charged with attempted murder.

⁵There were three persons charged with murder in 2006 in connection with three deaths, one that occurred in 2005. There were two persons charged with attempted murder and one charged with manslaughter. Also, one murder/suicide.

⁶There was one person charged with murder in 2007 in connection with a death that occurred in 2005. There were two persons charged with attempted murder and two persons charged with manslaughter.

⁷There were two persons charged with murder in 2008 in connection with two deaths. There were five persons charged with attempted murder.