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NEWS RELEASE

2014 Adult Felony Criminal Prosecutions in Dakota County

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for adult felony criminal prosecutions handled by his Office in 2014. **These statistics reflect the total number of adults charged with felonies in Dakota County.** The County Attorney is responsible for the prosecution of all felonies committed by adults, which includes persons 18 years of age and over and any juveniles certified for prosecution as adults.¹ According to Backstrom:

- The total number of **adults charged**² with felony offenses in Dakota County increased slightly by 1% (1565³ adults were charged with a felony-level offense in 2014, compared to 1,545 in 2013).

ADULTS CHARGED WITH FELONIES (BY CITY/JURISDICTION)

The following reflects the number of **adults that were charged with felonies** referred from individual cities and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office in Dakota County:

Apple Valley **decreased** from 153 to 123
Burnsville **increased** from 298 to 305
Dakota County Sheriff **increased** from 99 to 104
Eagan **decreased** from 251 to 244
Farmington **increased** from 33 to 41
Hastings **increased** from 87 to 118
Inver Grove Heights **increased** from 107 to 113
Lakeville **decreased** from 140 to 108
Mendota Heights **decreased** from 19 to 17
Rosemount **increased** from 31 to 52
South St. Paul **decreased** from 132 to 130
West St. Paul **increased** from 136 to 150

ILLEGAL DRUG OFFENSES CONTINUE AS TOP PROBLEM

The number of **drug-related offenses** continues to represent the largest category of cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office. A total of 372⁴ **adults** were charged with felony drug crimes in Dakota County in 2014, up from 350 the year before (an increase of 6%). The total number of defendants charged with drug offenses in 2014 represents almost 24% of the entire felony caseload of the Dakota County Attorney's Office (see the attached chart for drug trends in the past ten years).

A significant case involved four individuals who were charged with Conspiracy to Commit Controlled Substance Crimes and hundreds of high-quality marijuana plants, growing equipment, numerous pounds of marijuana packaged to sell, along with currency and vehicles that were seized. (For a copy of the criminal complaints filed against Thi An Mac; Trang Uyen Mac; Nghia Hoang Nguyen and Trung Van Nguyen, go to: <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/CriminalComplaint/Pages/default.aspx>.)

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MOST COMMON DRUG PROSECUTIONS:

Meth-related charges represent 46% of the drug-related offenses charged and these charges rose by 16% last year in Dakota County. Illegal prescription drug use also rose significantly in 2014 (up 35%). The total number of defendants charged with illegal drug crimes involving specific illegal drugs in 2014 is set forth below:

- Meth-related** – 172 individuals charged (148 in 2013)
- Prescription drugs** – 73 individuals charged (54 in 2013)
- Marijuana** – 62 individuals charged (68 in 2013)
- Cocaine** – 36 individuals charged (37 in 2013)
- Heroin** – 27 individuals charged (25 in 2013)

Backstrom commented: “Illegal drug use in Dakota County and across our state and nation is an enormous problem. We work hard with our law enforcement partners to protect our community from drug offenders and to hold them accountable for their crimes. We also partner with others in the criminal justice system to reduce the ongoing cycle of drug abuse.”

Backstrom praised the continued efforts of the **Dakota County Drug Task Force**, which consists of officers from the Dakota County Sheriff’s Office 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: *“By working together in this coordinated effort, we can reduce the problems associated with the use of illegal drugs in our community. The Dakota County Drug Task Force, which receives significant federal grant funding, is vital in getting illegal drugs off our streets and is extremely effective in combatting illegal drug activity each year in our community.”*

Many individuals who commit drug-related crimes are themselves addicted to drugs. The Dakota County Attorney collaborates with District Court Judges and a team of staff from Dakota County Community Corrections, Social Services, and law enforcement in Dakota County’s **Adult Drug Court**. Drug Court effectively and efficiently addresses repeat and non-violent drug offenders who demonstrate a willingness to address their chemical addiction. The goal of Drug Court is to resolve cases in a more proactive way by holding offenders accountable with an emphasis on needed treatment and reducing overall recidivism. In 2014, there were **25 adults** referred to the Adult Drug Court program, joining previously referred offenders working to complete the three phases of the program which involve frequent court appearances and intensive supervision. Since the start of the program in 2008, 52 offenders have successfully graduated.

CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

In 2014, **477 adults** were charged with 647 violent offenses in Dakota County. This represents an increase of 3% of the number of adults charged with a violent crime (from the 462 adults charged with 621 violent crimes in 2013). The following is a breakdown of these crimes:

- 9 individuals were charged with murder, attempted murder or manslaughter
- 8 individuals were charged with criminal vehicular homicide/injury
- 213 individuals were charged with felony assault (includes domestic-related)
- 108 individuals were charged with terroristic threats
- 69 individuals were charged with felony sex-related offenses
- 37 individuals were charged with dangerous weapons offenses
- 26 individuals were charged with robbery
- 7 individuals were charged with kidnapping

Backstrom stated: “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.”

DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH MURDER

In total, 4 victims died in connection with homicide cases charged in 2014⁵ in Dakota County. Last year **5 adults** were charged with murder which was down from 7 adults charged with murder in 2013. Two additional adults were charged with manslaughter in 2014, compared to 1 in 2013. Additionally, 3 individuals were charged with attempted murder in 2014, compared to 1 charged with attempted murder the previous year.

The most high profile murder to occur in Dakota County last year was the July 30, 2014 shooting death of Mendota Heights Police Officer Scott Patrick. Officer Patrick was the seventh law enforcement officer killed in Dakota County in the line of duty since the County was founded in 1849. Five of these deaths were caused by shooting. On February 2, 2015, Brian George Fitch was convicted of First Degree Murder for the shooting death of Officer Patrick and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

FELONY STRANGULATION CRIMES DECREASED

It is a felony to strangle or attempt to strangle someone. A total of **53 adults** were charged with felony domestic violence in Dakota County in 2014 (compared to 63 in 2013). Backstrom commented: *“Domestic violence continues to be a significant problem in our society. We need to make every effort to prevent these serious crimes, protect the victims, and hold offenders accountable for these acts of violence.”* Most domestic violence-related cases are either a misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor and are excellently handled by city attorneys.

FELONY-LEVEL DRIVING WHILE IMPAIRED CHARGES INCREASED SLIGHTLY

Each year in Minnesota, more than 32,000 people are arrested for DWI. There were **34 adults** charged with felony-level DWI in Dakota County in 2014 (compared to 31 in 2013). A felony DWI occurs if an offender has been previously convicted of three DWI's in the last 10 years (among several other ways) and commits a fourth DWI offense. A first time DWI offense can result in loss of license for up to a year, thousands of dollars in costs and possible jail time. There are stronger sanctions for repeat DWI offenders, as well as for motorists arrested for a first-time DWI with an alcohol concentration level of 0.16 and above. Under these sanctions, DWI offenders must use ignition interlock for at least a year or face at least one year without driving privileges. Ignition interlock requires the driver to provide a breath sample under 0.02 for the vehicle to start. As with most domestic violence-related cases, city attorneys prosecute the bulk of DWI's (misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors) in Dakota County and do an excellent job on these important cases.

Last year marked the largest decrease in the number of deaths in motor vehicle crashes in Minnesota since 1944 (370⁶ persons were killed in 2014 compared to 387 in 2013). Approximately one out of every five traffic fatalities in Minnesota is alcohol-related. In Dakota County last year, **11 individuals were killed** in motor vehicle crashes, compared to 18 individuals who died in such crashes in 2013. It is estimated that about 23% were alcohol-related. Distracted driving is a growing problem that we all must take steps to prevent. It is important to note that one in four traffic crashes (at least 70 deaths and 350 serious injuries) are caused by “distracted” or inattentive driving (including illegal texting while driving).

Backstrom praised Dakota County law enforcement agencies for their ongoing commitment to eliminate driving under the influence and distracted driving and keeping our roadways safe. *Backstrom commented: “We must remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent impaired and distracted driving which kills thousands of people and seriously injures hundreds of thousands more each year in America. I remain committed to preventing these senseless tragedies from happening in our community.”*

FELONY PROPERTY CRIMES DECREASED

In 2014, **594 adults** were charged with 706 felony-level property crimes in Dakota County, compared to 631 adults charged with 742 such crimes in 2013 (a decrease of almost 6%). City attorneys prosecute many more misdemeanor-level theft crimes each year in Dakota County.

The following is a breakdown of the felony-property crimes charged in 2014:

- 245 individuals charged with theft-related offenses
- 142 individuals charged with forgery or credit card fraud
- 97 individuals charged with burglary
- 71 individuals charged with stolen property
- 36 individuals charged with criminal damage to property
- 21 individuals charged with public assistance fraud
- 3 individuals charged with tax-related offenses

In 2014, there was one individual charged in Dakota County with felony-theft involving a loss in excess of over **\$100,000** (this theft involved a youth-serving organization) compared to two such cases charged in 2013. Backstrom explained, *“Felony property crimes often involve a serious breach of trust and result in significant financial losses.”*

SERVING VICTIMS OF CRIME

The Victim/Witness Unit of the Dakota County Attorney’s Office served **2,099 people** who were impacted by crime in 2014. In addition to providing adult and juvenile victims what is required by statute, advocates explain the charges, the criminal justice process, how to receive restitution, write a victim impact statement and all other aspects of their case. Staff also accompanies the victim to court as needed. *“Assisting crime victims who have suffered great personal trauma or financial loss is one of the most important services provided by the Dakota County Attorney’s Office,”* Backstrom noted.

One such individual, Paul Traub, a survivor of a violent home invasion in Burnsville, that almost took his life, was nominated by the Dakota County Attorney⁷ during the National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and received the Special Courage Award in Washington, D.C. from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime. *“Paul Traub is a remarkable man who has exhibited more courage, strength and absolve than I could ever hope to do under similar circumstances,”* Backstrom said. *“Paul Traub will never be forgotten by those of us in the Dakota County Attorney’s Office who were privileged to work with him,”* he added.

CRIMINAL APPEALS

Backstrom indicated that his Office was involved in filing or responding to **46 appeals** in criminal cases in 2014, compared to 44 in 2013. Appeals involve significant staff resources and are necessary in efforts to insure accountability for criminal offenders and the fair administration of justice.

COURT HEARINGS

A total of **14,871** court calendar events were scheduled in 2014 involving cases prosecuted by the Dakota County Attorney’s Office (compared to 14,083 in 2013).

Attached is a chart detailing adults charged with felony-level crimes and the number of felony charges filed by the Dakota County Attorney’s Office in 2014. Also attached is a chart comparing statistical information about adult felony prosecutions for the last decade. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at www.co.dakota.mn.us under Law & Justice.

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

¹ In 2014, there were three juveniles prosecuted as adults in Dakota County.

² Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

³ Some of these defendants may have been charged more than once in the same or in separate behavioral incidents.

⁴ Some of the defendants were charged with crimes involving more than one illegal drug in the same or separate behavioral incidents.

⁵ Two of these involved incidents that occurred in 2013 (deaths of Anarae Schunk and Key’ontay Miller Peterson).

⁶ This is the preliminary 2014 data provided by the Office of Traffic Safety of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

⁷ See News Release online at: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/AttorneyNewsReleases/Pages/Dakota-County-Crime-Victim-Paul-Traub-Receives-the-National-Special-Courage-Award-from-the-U.S.-Department-of-Justice’s-Off.aspx> .

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Dakota County Attorney's Office
Adult Felony Statistics 2014
Cases Charged

		TOTALS	Abuse/Neglect of a Minor	Alcohol Related Traffic	Arson/Neg. Fires	Burglary/Trespassing Related	Crim Damage to Property	Crim Vehic Homicide/Injury	Drug Related	Escape/Obstruct Justice/Tamper with Witness	Fleeing	Forgery/FC Fraud	Fugitive From Justice	Gambling	Harassment/Stalking	Homicide/Aiding Suicide	Kidnap/False Imprisonment	Mistreatment of Animals	Motor Vehicle Theft/Tampering	Paternity/Child Support/Custody Related	Public Assistance Fraud	Public Health & Safety/Coercion/Fail to Register	Robbery	Sex Related	Stolen Property Related	Strangulation/Assault Related	Tax Related	Terroristic Threats	Theft Related	Weapons/Explosives
TOTALS	Charges Cases	2220 1565	6 3	56 34	6 5	118 97	37 36	17 8	493 372	11 10	52 52	161 142	52 52	4 2	72 63	29 9	7 7	2 1	30 30	1 1	44 21	38 36	32 26	117 69	71 71	288 213	31 3	115 108	288 245	42 37
Apple Valley PD	Charges Cases	192 123	0 0	4 2	0 0	13 8	4 4	4 1	46 27	0 0	5 5	14 13	2 2	0 0	5 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	1 1	1 1	23 11	7 7	17 14	0 0	10 10	34 26	0 0	
Burnsville PD	Charges Cases	435 305	0 0	4 2	2 1	32 28	5 4	2 2	66 52	6 6	5 5	39 31	6 8	4 2	29 23	11 2	3 3	2 1	2 2	0 0	0 0	3 3	7 5	15 10	12 12	67 48	0 0	26 26	76 67	9 8
Dakota County Sheriff's Office	Charges Cases	160 104	0 0	5 4	0 0	0 0	3 3	0 0	31 21	2 1	6 6	9 6	19 19	0 0	3 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 3	0 0	44 21	2 2	0 0	4 3	2 2	13 10	0 0	5 4	7 5	2 2
Eagan PD	Charges Cases	337 244	0 0	3 2	0 0	19 14	6 6	0 0	94 76	0 0	6 6	18 17	1 1	0 0	3 3	3 1	0 0	0 0	6 6	0 0	5 4	7 6	15 10	13 13	48 34	0 0	17 13	66 60	7 6	
Farmington PD	Charges Cases	57 41	2 1	2 1	1 1	11 11	0 0	0 0	9 8	0 0	0 0	2 2	3 3	0 0	4 3	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	8 1	3 3	6 5	0 0	2 2	3 3	0 0
Hastings PD	Charges Cases	157 118	0 0	2 1	0 0	5 4	0 0	0 0	41 30	0 0	6 6	8 7	3 3	0 0	5 5	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	1 1	0 0	15 14	2 1	15 10	6 6	20 16	0 0	6 6	12 11	8 7
Inver Grove Hts PD	Charges Cases	155 113	0 0	7 4	0 0	5 4	5 5	1 1	51 34	1 1	6 6	8 8	3 3	0 0	4 4	0 0	2 2	0 0	3 3	0 0	1 1	1 1	8 6	1 1	24 20	0 0	9 9	13 8	2 2	
Lakeville PD	Charges Cases	149 108	0 0	11 6	0 0	5 3	2 2	1 1	26 23	0 0	6 6	20 15	5 5	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	5 5	2 2	11 7	10 10	13 9	0 0	7 6	21 19	1 1	
Mendota Heights PD	Charges Cases	18 17	0 0	1 1	0 0	1 1	2 2	0 0	2 2	0 0	1 1	3 3	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	2 2	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0
MN State Patrol/ East Metro Div	Charges Cases	28 23	0 0	7 5	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	12 10	0 0	1 1	1 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 2	0 0	1 1	1 1	0 0
Rosemount PD	Charges Cases	73 52	0 0	1 1	0 0	8 8	2 2	0 0	11 11	0 0	4 4	2 2	0 0	0 0	4 3	4 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 1	0 0	6 3	2 2	9 8	0 0	5 4	12 7	2 2	
South St Paul PD	Charges Cases	170 130	1 1	0 0	1 1	9 7	1 1	2 1	35 30	1 1	3 3	7 7	4 4	0 0	4 4	1 1	0 0	0 0	5 5	0 0	2 2	7 7	9 6	7 7	44 30	0 0	11 11	10 10	6 4	
West St Paul PD	Charges Cases	212 150	3 1	9 5	0 0	10 9	4 4	6 1	50 38	1 1	3 3	24 24	3 3	0 0	9 9	10 3	1 1	0 0	3 3	0 0	3 3	5 3	3 2	4 4	22 15	0 0	15 15	22 18	2 2	
Other Agencies	Charges Cases	77 37	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	3 3	0 0	19 10	0 0	0 0	6 6	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 2	0 0	31 3	1 1	10 9	3 3

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 Agencies). 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.

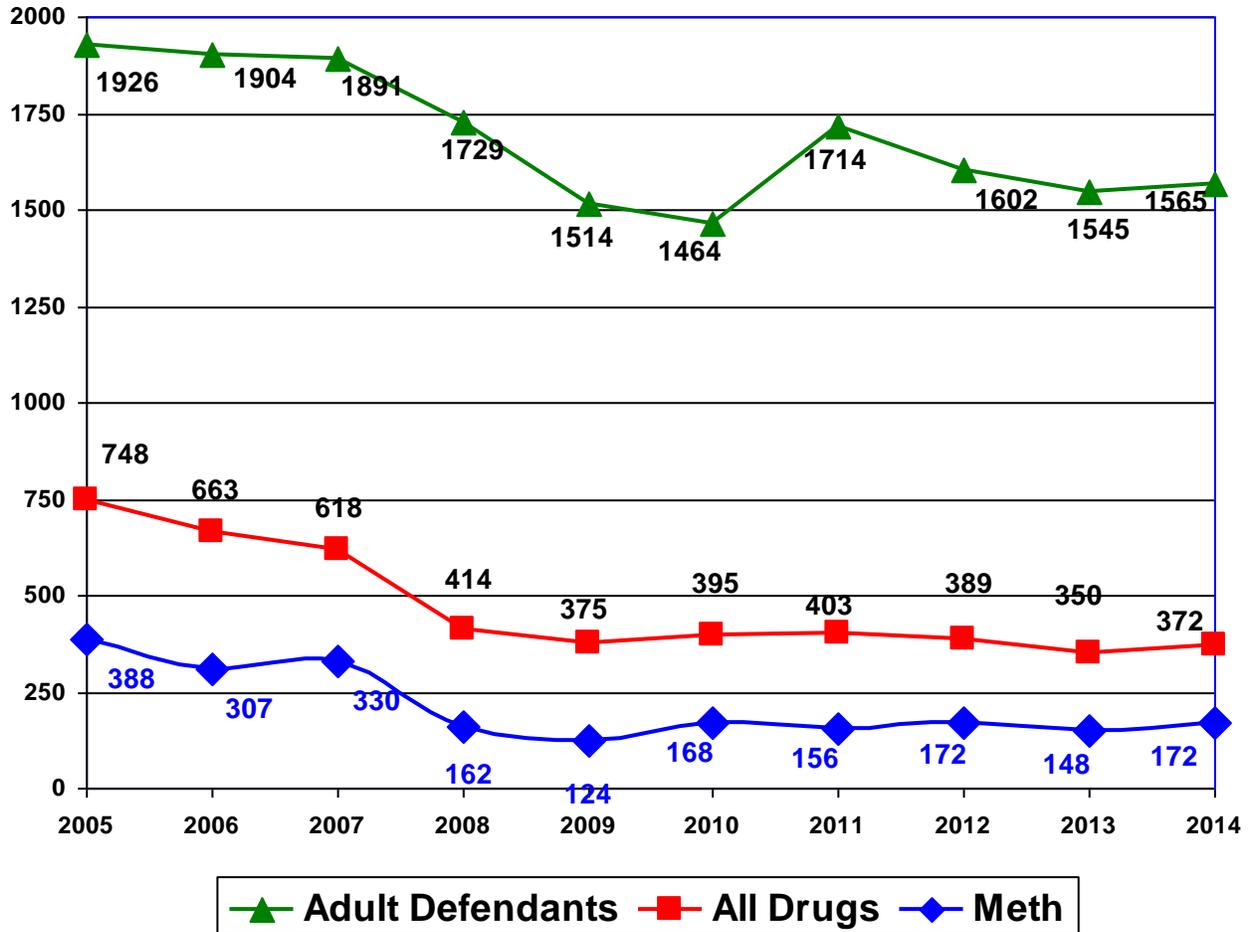
2 Sex-related includes child pornography.

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

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

Dakota County

All Adults Charged with a Felony, Drug-Related and Meth-Related Crimes 2005-2014



Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney