Crime on the decline

Following these tips can make you less vulnerable on the street:

- Know where you are going.
- Walk at a good, steady pace.
- Look confident.
- Avoid carrying lots of packages.
- Stay on well-lit streets.
- Change course if someone is following you.

What to do if you have been raped:

- Report the rape.
- Go to a hospital.
- Talk to someone you trust.
- See a counselor.

Source: Sexual Abuse Response Center

LAFAYETTE
Lafayette's crime rate dropped in 2000 when compared with other cities in Louisiana, but reported rapes rose 61 percent.

The huge increase in reported rapes was caused by an influx of date rape drugs and more reporting by victims of rape, officials said.

"The date rape drugs have influenced the number of rapes occurring," said Faith Moody with the Sexual Abuse Response Center in Lafayette. "However, due to the increased knowledge and awareness between all of the interfacing agencies, rapes are being reported more."

Final 2000 data released by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program in the annual publication Crime in the United States, show that overall crime in the city of Lafayette was down 4 percent in 2000 from 1999.

The program program measures violent and property crimes - murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Comparisons of crime rates with other cities is difficult because use of the reporting system by law enforcement agencies is voluntary. Baton Rouge, for example, did not submit statistics.

Loveleta Simmons, president of the Laplace DeCreole neighborhood group between East Simcoe and Congress streets, said she's noticed a decrease in crime. Her neighborhood is known to locals as Fightingville.

"So far on our end of town, we don't have too much crime right now," Simmons said. "At one time, we had prostitutes, but they cut down on that."

Simmons said community policing by the Lafayette Police Department is helping cut down on crime.

"It helps a lot," she said. "The criminals are aware they are watching."

Cpl. Mark Francis, spokesman for the Lafayette Police Department, said crime in Lafayette has been on the decline since about 1998, when community policing became the focus of the department.

The focus of community policing by the Lafayette Police Department is helping cut down on crime.

"It helps a lot," she said. "The criminals are aware they are watching."

Crime Rates for Louisiana Cities, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Total Crimes</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALEXANDRIA</td>
<td>5,912</td>
<td>11,940.02</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>119,396</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime total</td>
<td>5,912</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder/manslaughter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>-26.60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>338.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>685.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Larceny-theft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>274.6</td>
<td>-3.00%</td>
</tr>
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LAFAYETTE
Lafayette Police Sgt. Paul Matte, top, conducts a briefing Monday before officers begin their shift.

See CRIME on Page 6A

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports

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Crime

POLICING is for patrol officers to make contact with people in neighborhoods to get to know them and their concerns better.

"Instead of being reactionary, we're in a proactive mode," Francis said. "We're working with community members, and targeting neighborhoods that are stricken with crime."

Crime in the city of Lafayette showed increases throughout the early to mid-1990s, with record criminal activity in 1993, when 18 murders were committed.

"We were reactionary. That's why crime was up," Francis said.

Lafayette is now being touted as a safe place to live and work by the business community.

For example, the Lafayette Visitors and Convention Commission markets Mardi Gras as a safe family event, apart from rowdy festivities in other cities.

"We don't have a reputation for a high crime area, so it's not an issue for tourists," said Kelly Strenge, public relations manager for the tourist center in Lafayette.