Lafayette reports increase in crimes

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LAFAYETTE — Major crimes increased here in 1994, although slayings and auto thefts dropped significantly, city police report.

According to crime statistics prepared each year by the department for the FBI, Lafayette's overall Major Crime Index increased by 7.6 percent in 1994.

The FBI requests numbers on murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, theft and auto theft.

The number of homicides in Lafayette dropped from 18 in 1993 to seven in 1994.

A department spokesman, Sgt. Ned Ewing, said the type of slayings also changed. "For the first time, the majority of our murders occurred between people who knew each other," Ewing said.

For instance, one case involved two cousins fighting over a debt, and another involved two rivals in cock fighting, Ewing said.

"These are the kinds of murders you can't impact," Ewing said. "Prevention has no impact on these incidents."

The drop of 30 percent in auto thefts really isn't a drop, Ewing said. In 1993, there was a large increase in the crime, he said.

"There was definitely an organized auto theft ring operating here in 1993. It was a banner year for auto theft," Ewing said. "So the drop last year doesn't necessarily reflect a decrease. Actually, we're back to the normal number."

And those people who were victims of the crime in 1994 usually had better luck than those who were hit in 1993, he said.

"In 1993, you never saw those cars again; they were gone," Ewing said. "In 1994, it looks like we're back to the joy riding. We usually found those cars a short time after they were stolen."

August was the month for car thefts, with 50 reported, the numbers indicate. That's 20 more than the next closest month.

The city did see an increase in reported rapes, from 55 to 72, and Ewing attributed much of that to increased willingness of victims to report the crime. The most rapes in the city occurred in July.

Robberies were up 27 percent, assaults were up 4.8 percent, burglary increased 19 percent, and theft increased 6.9 percent.

Robberies were highest in April, burglaries in December. The increases in robberies and burglaries are linked to drugs, Ewing said.

"That's due to the crack cocaine problem in Lafayette," he said. "Those increases are a direct reflection of the increase of drug trafficking here."

Overall, the 7.6 percent increase isn't unexpected, Ewing said.

"Lafayette continues to grow," he said. "As Lafayette continues to prosper, we can expect to see an almost proportionate increase in the number of crimes."