

# Violent crime rose in Fresno last year

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**The Fresno Bee**

Fresno's violent crime rate rose 5.4%, while property crimes declined 4.9% from 2008 to 2009, Police Chief Jerry Dyer said Monday.

By contrast, the national rate dropped about 5%, the FBI reported Monday.

Street robberies were the primary reason for the rise in violent crimes in 2009, Dyer said. Murders in Fresno were up slightly from 40 in 2008 to 42 last year.

Dyer said year-to-year comparisons need to be analyzed. However, he said he is more concerned with more recent statistics.

"The crime statistics that came out last year are not as important as what is occurring now," he said.

Dyer's department is focusing on trying to curb the number of homicides in the city. Fresno has had 21 homicides this year as of Monday, compared with 12 at the same time last year.

Clovis had small increases in robberies, rapes and property crimes and a significant drop in assaults in 2009, said Calli Biaggi, a Police Department spokeswoman.

The city had two homicides in 2009, the same as the previous year.

Visalia's crime rates were down in categories that include robbery and thefts in 2009. However, rapes and assaults rose, city statistics showed.

"In some areas we made great improvements and in other areas we still have work to do," said Sgt. Steve Phillips, Visalia police spokesman.