

Ask the Chief

Dear Chief: How does the City of Alamosa compare to similar-sized cities in Colorado in terms of crime; what steps are being taken locally to reduce crime?

Dear Concerned Citizen: In recent months APD has been researching historical crime data (this information is all searchable online) for the purpose of determining new strategies for reduction and also to positively contribute to our City Council's four focus areas (Aesthetics, Community, Economic Development, and Environmental Responsibility).

What we have learned is that the City of Alamosa, in comparison to similar-sized cities and communities in Colorado has a higher than average crime rate. As an example, data compared over a **five year period** shows our annual average of reported property crimes at 511 per year. In comparison, the cities of Cortez and Delta report an average of 330 property crimes per year. Meanwhile, in other parts of the state Craig reported 260 property crimes per year and Johnstown 141. Granted there is no identical city to us, but the data clearly shows we have room for improvement.

Criminal activity ties directly to three of the four City Council Focus areas (Aesthetics, Community, and Economic Development). Specifically, our community's **aesthetic** appearance falls to some extent on the shoulders of APD in terms of effectively addressing issues like weeds, animal violations, graffiti, trash, and overall public order. From a **community** perspective, we (APD) must concern ourselves with crime rates and types of crime and create partnerships and strategies that are effective. We can have a positive effect on **economic development** by virtue of effectively addressing aesthetics and community; citizens and/or businesses seeking to relocate to Alamosa do their own online research or visit and evaluate us for cleanliness, character, and safety.

As a result of our recent research, we have begun to employ new strategies that meet the needs and desires of City Council. In daily operations we (law enforcement) recognized a need to bring valley-wide law enforcement partners together to more proactively share information about crime and criminals. Currently APD hosts weekly meetings with local law enforcement partners and our colleagues from Probation and Parole. At the executive level, the Chief's/Sheriff/Majors and Captains from Adams State University, Alamosa Police Department, Alamosa County Sheriff's Office, and the Colorado State Patrol meet monthly to discuss criminal activity and strategic plans. Most recently, a probation officer co-located in the Alamosa Police Department building and we now have the first-ever volunteer program in Alamosa Police Department history. It is this sort of thinking, information sharing, and partnering that will propel us successfully into the future. When attacking crime issues in our community it is important to understand the community's desires (City Council Focus Areas), get to know and understand the community and its offenders, and be willing to look at traditional policy and process with a fresh set of eyes and a willingness to change. With conservatively 500-700 state-supervised offenders living in Alamosa and having a county jail consistently at capacity (86) with another 40 inmates being sent (at added cost) to surrounding county jails we have no alternative to being innovative and open to change.

The criminal justice system (as a whole) is dealing with a very complex set of issues. With dwindling budgets, poor economic conditions, and limited resources we must look at new ways to address old problems and we are doing just that.

Craig Dodd, Chief of Police