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Homicides in C.R. doubled in 2003

Christoph Trappe The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS Reported crime in Cedar Rapids last year was down overall, but homicides were up. Murders went from two in 2002 to four in 2003, a preliminary report released Friday by Cedar Rapids police shows. Overall, reported crime decreased 8.9 percent.

The homicide total is the highest since 1999, when there also were four homicides. In 1998, there were seven homicides.

"Obviously, any homicide is too many," Cedar Rapids Police Chief Mike Klappholz said.

Last year's homicides were:

- * The Jan. 6 death of Joseph Harris. Harris' body was found in the front passenger seat of a green 1995 Lincoln in the 3600 block of Wenig Road NE with gunshot wounds to the head. Nobody has been charged with murder in this case, and the investigation continues.
- * The Feb. 24 death of Kayla Blahnik, 3. Charles J. Goddard, 27, has been charged with first-degree murder in the case. Goddard was alone with Kayla in a home at 712 Owen St. NW when the girl fell down stairs and later died from head injuries, according to records.
- * The April deaths of Jay Grahlman, 38, and his 6-year-old daughter, Jaymie. The two died from injuries suffered in an April 6 fire at 3755 H Ave. NE. Brian Zirtzman, 39, has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder in the case for allegedly setting fire to the home so he could save the family, court records show (story on 1B).

The number of homicides is just above the city's average of three a year, Klappholz said. Most reported crimes declined, the report shows (see chart). Klappholz said the decrease in overall crime is good, but actual crime compared to reported crime is different.

"Just because it's going great doesn't mean people aren't being victimized," he said. Klappholz encouraged people to report crimes to authorities. Reported accidents, however, are on the rise, the report shows.

In 2002, there were 3,659 property-damage accidents, compared with 4,489 in 2003 almost a 23 percent increase.

Accidents where somebody was injured jumped from 449 to 486, an 8 percent increase.

Illustration: GRAPHIC

Gazette graphic

Cedar Rapids traffic stats Cedar Rapids crime stats

