

Alton Police Department increases effort after rise in drug arrests

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ALTON - In January of this year, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that in 2015 Violent Crime had increased in three out of the four regions of the United States. The City of Alton is not unique to this trend.

The Alton Police Department recently submitted its verified crime statistics to the Illinois State Police, and like most of the nation, these numbers indicate an increase over the previous year.

Much of the crime in the City of Alton is associated with drug activity within the city and in neighboring communities. Further, Alton has experienced an increase in the number of offenders entering the city from Missouri.

Recognizing national crime trends early last year, especially as they correlate with drug-related activity in **Alton**, **Police Chief Jason “Jake” Simmons** took pro-active action to reorganize the Department’s Drug Unit. As a result, drug arrests increased in the second half of 2015. Further, Chief Simmons will be adding another officer to the drug unit in April of this year.

“No one is pleased with the 2015 crime statistics,” said Chief Simmons. “While Alton closely mirrored the national trend in 2015, we strive to perform better than national trends.”

“In the previous two years of 2013 and 2014, crime decreased substantially in Alton and our numbers had reached historic lows,” continued Simmons. “With lower numbers of incidents, even a slight change in raw numbers can make the change in percentage look staggering.”

The City of Alton, like other communities across Illinois, has faced financial hardship in recent years. The Alton Police Department has not been immune to those issues. Due to budgetary constraints, the city has been forced to eliminate several vacant positions in recent years as the Alton Police Department, like other city departments, learns to do more with less. Currently, the Department has 57 officers, the fewest number on staff in decades.

“The Alton Police Department has implemented many changes in recent years to address the financial hardship facing our city,” said Chief Simmons. “Like every department in the City, we have been forced to do more with less. For the most part, we have been successful in implementing new strategies to face our financial challenges, but with fewer resources, there are times when the Department must be more reactive instead of proactive when approaching crime.”

In the past three years, Chief Simmons has worked with the Command Staff of the Alton Police Department and the Mayor’s office to implement a more community based

policing strategy in an effort to engage the community and build open dialogue with the citizens of Alton. That strategy includes having officers become more engaged within the community so that citizens have positive interaction with the Police Department.

“In recent years, we have been successful in building a more positive relationship with our citizens,” said Chief Simmons. “While we still have work to do to continue building positive relationships across the community, the increased engagement within our community has provided us with the type of information that has allowed us to more proactively address areas of concern.”

“Continuing to build bridges within our community is essential to our ability to combat the crime trends that we are seeing nationally,” continued Simmons.

“While the 2015 crime statistics are not satisfactory to any member of the Alton Police Department, we recognized the national trend early on and begin implementing changes to address those trends,” said Simmons. “We began to see the benefits of those changes during the latter part of 2015, and I am confident that through the hard work of the dedicated officers of the Alton Police Department that we will look back on the 2015 crime statistics as an anomaly.”

Alton Police Department Crime Statistics 2015

INDEX CRIMES 2015

	<u>Murder</u>	<u>Sex Offenses</u>	<u>Robbery</u>	<u>Assault/Battery</u>	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Theft</u>	<u>MV Theft</u>	<u>Arson</u>
2014	2	16	29	90	244	889	65	8
2015	1	26	31	74	291	985	52	12
Change	-50%	63%	7%	-18%	19%	11%	-20%	50%

Total Index Crimes

Jan-Dec 2014	1343
Jan-Dec 2015	1472
Change:	10%

INDEX ARRESTS 2015

	<u>Murder</u>	<u>Sex Offenses</u>	<u>Robbery</u>	<u>Assault/Battery</u>	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Theft</u>	<u>MV Theft</u>	<u>Arson</u>
2014	3	7	24	57	56	293	7	2
2015	1	7	18	33	32	327	6	5
Change	-67%	0%	-25%	-42%	-43%	12%	-14%	150%

Total Index Arrests

Jan-Dec 2014	449
Jan-Dec 2015	429
Change:	-4%

DRUG ARRESTS 2015

	<u>Cannabis Control Act</u>	<u>Controlled Substances</u>	<u>Meth</u>
2014	71	126	0
2015	63	121	7
Change	-11%	-4%	700%

Total Drug Arrests

Jan-Dec 2014	256
Jan-Dec 2015	270
Change:	INCREASE OF 5%