

Crime Rates Drop Again In California

'3 strikes' law cited as reason for big decline

By Greg Lucas

Chronicle Sacramento Bureau

Sacramento

Crime in California dropped 7 percent during the first six months of 1995, with double-digit decreases in homicide, rape and robbery, according to statistics released yesterday by the state attorney general's office.

The decline follows a trend that began in 1993 and continued in 1994, when all six major types of crime measured by the state fell for the first time in recent years.

"This is one of the most remarkable years we've had," said Attorney General Dan Lungren in presenting the statistics. "You can't laugh at or ignore significant drops in crime."

Lungren credited the continuing decline to the deterrent value of the so-called "three strikes and you're out" sentencing law, which was enacted in March 1994.

The law requires a person convicted of a third felony after com-

Lungren's statistics, culled from the 63 largest law enforcement agencies in California, show that the number of homicides reported fell 10.6 percent from the same period in 1994. Rapes dropped 10.8 percent. Robberies fell the most — 12.7 percent.

National statistics gathered by the FBI show that the incidence of crime fell 3 percent in 1994 from 1993. No preliminary statistics are available for this year. By compari-

CRIME: Page A9 Col. 5

From Page 1

son, crime in California dropped 5.2 percent in 1994 from 1993 levels.

The state's overall crime rate has been declining since 1983, but the past three years have shown the most substantial declines. Lungren said crime rates now are back to the levels of the 1970s.

California measures six types of crimes — homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary

DROPS IN MAJOR STATE CRIMES

Percentage decrease in reported California crimes for the first six months of 1995 compared to the first six months of 1994

- ▼ 12.7% robbery
- ▼ 10.8% rape
- ▼ 10.6% homicide
- ▼ 8.4% motor vehicle theft
- ▼ 6.3% burglary
- ▼ 2.3% aggravated assault

Source: California Department of Justice

In the unincorporated areas of Alameda County, the number of homicides rose from three to five. In Berkeley, homicides were unchanged between the two years, at five. The Oakland Police Depart-

ment has not provided statistics, Lungren said.

In Contra Costa County, homicides dropped from 14 during the first six months of 1994 to 13 in 1995. Homicides in Concord were unchanged at two but the number of reported robberies declined from 111 to 67 — a 40 percent tumble.

The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department reported a drop in homicides from six to one but had 19 reported rapes in 1995, up from 17 in 1994.

In Sunnyvale, the number of homicides doubled to two. The number of rapes reported was unchanged at 15, while robberies and aggravated assaults both fell by 30 percent.

San Jose saw an increase in the