

CRIME 'FREE' FESTIVE SEASON

SURPRISE DIP: Drop
in rape, robberies
and hijackings

Brian Hayward

FEARS of a crime-ridden festive season have proved largely unfounded with police reporting a surprise dip in violent crime along with a jump in foiled robberies throughout the Eastern and Southern Cape region.

According to security analysts, integrated crime fighting campaigns and increased co-operation between armed response companies and the SAPS have resulted in "one of the lowest violent crime (festive) seasons in the past decade".

And while attempted robberies and break-ins of households and businesses have risen slightly, a greater police presence – bolstered by a bigger festive season force – has seen several would-be robberies foiled, they say.

The unexpected trend has also seen no ATM bombings or cash-in-transit heists take place in the region during the holidays, while dangerous contact crimes like hijackings, rape and home robberies have dropped dramatically.

Last month police arrested five suspected robbers and wounded another in a shoot-out outside Nelson Mandela Bay's Kragga Kamma Spar in a foiled cash-in-transit heist.

This is in sharp contrast to the December 2008 crime spree which saw several armed gangs roam Bay

E Cape enjoys dip in festive season crime

FROM P1

neighbourhoods, tying up residents and robbing them, while early that month police arrested two men thought to be part of a human trafficking syndicate in Central

Also in December 2008, on the Garden Route, hijackers preyed on motorists and police arrested three murder suspects over one weekend following the violent deaths of four people in separate incidents.

"We will only be able to say for sure how much crime has dropped when we gather statistics from all our stations at the end of the season (in mid-January)," said Eastern Cape police spokesman Superintendent Nondumiso Jaftha. "But crime does seem to have dropped, thanks to the programmes which police have been carrying out

over the festive season. We have had a higher visibility of police at public areas like beaches and in business hubs than in the past."

Southern Cape police spokesman Captain Malcolm Pojie said serious crime was down compared with previous years, thanks in large part to the co-operation between various law enforcement agencies, including traffic officers as well as the parks department and nature conservation authorities.

Police have been lauded for their hard work.

"Criminals have seen the higher law enforcement presence. There has also been greater communication between the police and security companies. This (season) is one to remember, thanks to great team work," said Bay-based Atlas security company operations

manager Monty Montgomery.

He said he didn't have anything negative to say about police work over the holidays.

"There have been suspicious guys all over, but we have tailed them with police and searched them.

Many times that resulted in arrests," Montgomery said. "Areas like Summerstrand have seen a 100% improvement."

He said nine out of 10 break-ins had resulted in no loss, as criminals had been caught in the act.

While other security companies reported a slight rise in crime in some areas, they said their clients had not been harmed.

National security company ADT saw a rise in robberies and attempted robberies in the Bay for December, but in most cases clients had been unharmed, said ADT

Eastern Cape head Michael Byers. East London Code Blue Alarms technical manager Colin Roux said while there had been a slight increase in "smash and grab" burglaries in the city's CBD, there had been no reports of serious contact crimes.

Bay police spokesman Inspector Alwin Labans said officers had sacrificed time with their families to ensure a crime-free holiday season.

"We put emphasis on crime prevention and had more officers on duty, as well as more road blocks and foot patrols," he said.

"We've been working around the clock. The various stations have also been concentrating on their business areas and putting all their personnel on the street (to patrol)."

"That made a huge difference throughout the Bay."