What NIBRS Means for My City

Introducing the new National method for crime reporting to KCSO and partner cities

Beginning January 1, 2018, the King County Sheriff's Office will implement the FBI's new method for recording and reporting crime in all our jurisdictions, including our partner cities and unincorporated areas. The new method is called "NIBRS," or National Incident-Based Reporting System. This information details why, how, when, and explains the impact to our partner cities.

Why is KCSO making this change?
The FBI decided that the United States needs a new method for nationwide uniform crime reporting (UCR) and set a date of 2021 for all agencies to be converted to the new method. KCSO will begin recording and reporting under the new method, called "NIBRS," in 2018.

Why the change?
The FBI initiated NIBRS to improve the overall quality of law enforcement crime data. Since 1929, the country has been using a "summary-based" method for reporting crime. The Summary UCR method historically recorded and reported only the most serious offense committed in an incident, even though the incident could have involved multiple offenses. In 1991, the FBI initiated NIBRS as an "incident-based" method of reporting, which collects vastly more information per incident.

How is NIBRS more thorough than Summary UCR?
Summary UCR provided counts for the eight most serious Part I index crimes and on arrests for 21 other Part II offenses. It recorded the most serious offense per incident, as determined by a hierarchy rule, which suppressed counts of lesser offenses in multiple-offense incidents. In contrast, NIBRS collects victim, offender, property, and arrestee information on the original eight offenses plus 48 other offenses, with up to 10 offenses per incident. It also distinguishes between attempted and completed crimes and collects weapon information for all violent offenses.

Will police investigate more crimes as a result of using NIBRS?
Law enforcement will continue to investigate the same number of incidents; however, for reporting purposes, all offenses within the incident will be submitted rather than only the one most serious.

Can you compare Summary UCR to NIBRS crime statistics?
The short answer is NO. An unfortunate thing about the transition to a completely new way to record and report crime data is that there is no good comparison between the two. To compare a Summary UCR report with a NIBRS report would lead to erroneous conclusions about what's happening with crime in your city. We will not be able to begin comparing annual crime trends again until we have two years worth of NIBRS data.

What will the impact be?
The effect of collecting more information and offenses per incident in most cases and, with most crime categories, results in higher offense numbers. Does that mean crime has gone up? Not necessarily! In fact, crime could have gone down over the transition period, but you really wouldn't know it because you cannot compare old to new. The impact of the transition is not on crime rates or trends, but on what the city's statistics may illustrate about crime.

How to manage the transition
The best way to manage the transition and explain crime before and after implementation is to talk closely with your police chief about what they're seeing. The anecdotal and operational knowledge your police team has will allow you and the city to bridge the transition period fairly seamlessly. And, once we have a couple years of NIBRS data, we will again be able to start annual comparisons.

What is the timeline for transition in our crime statistics?
KCSO will begin recording crime statistics in NIBRS-compliant format January 1, 2018. Therefore, 2018 will be the first full year cities will have NIBRS crime statistics recorded. If your city receives monthly or quarterly reports from your police chief or the KCSO Crime Analysis Unit, those reports will be reported in NIBRS data beginning first quarter 2018. The first annual report in NIBRS format will be published early 2019. All KCSO partner cities will have NIBRS crime data published in the 2018 WASPC *Crime in Washington* report, published Spring 2019.

" . . . [T]he Summary system of the UCR Program has been very serviceable *since its inception in 1929, but it pales next to the capabilities and potential of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). In developing NIBRS, UCR Program managers*

have provided law enforcement agencies with a standardized, electronic blueprint for storing the NIBRS data within their individual records management systems....The goals of NIBRS are to enhance the quantity, quality, and timeliness of crime data collection ...and to improve the methodology used in compiling, analyzing, auditing, and publishing the collected crime statistics."

- FBI, CJIS Newsletter, NIBRS edition, 4, 1, p 1

Examples of crime rate transition from UCR to NIBRS for regional cities

With the implementation of NIBRS, crime category counts and crime rates will likely change for your city. The historic sampling of WASPC crime rate reporting for regional cities below illustrates differences in between the before-and-after transition from UCR and NIBRS. As you'll note, it appears that most cities are seeing a higher number with the NIBRS crime rate. *It is critical to understand that a higher crime rate number under NIBRS reporting does not necessarily indicate a higher level of crime activity in your city.* NIBRS crime counts will not be comparable to former UCR number counts. Therefore, cities are encouraged to work closely with their police chiefs, and allow two years of NIBRS data to be reported before attempting to make comparisons.

Municipality	2010 UCR Crime Rate	2011 UCR Crime Rate	2012 NIBRS Crime Rate	2013 NIBRS Crime Rate	2014 NIBRS Crime Rate	2015 NIBRS Crime Rate	2016 NIBRS Crime Rate
Algona	20.5	17.7	45.0	41.6	45.3	51.9	40.0
Auburn	59.9	58.1	NR	103.7	121.1	115.6	98.0
Bellevue	32.0	30.0	NR	NR	NR	47.1	47.5
Black Diamond	12.6	14.7	50.1	33.1	22.5	27.6	26.9
Bothell	27.8	27.7	51.6	45.3	48.9	50.7	52.9
Clyde Hill	12.3	12.4	18.1	16.4	21.7	24.8	30.4
Des Moines	36.3	38.6	NR	66.2	70.8	60.6	73.1
Duvall	6.8	6.4	NR	17.1	16.7	12.3	12.4
Edmonds	22.7	25.7	NR	NR	NR	9.9	65.3
Federal Way	56.8	50.5	105.3	105.4	105.0	99.9	108.4
Issaquah	28.2	24.8	46.2	45.6	58.6	55.8	60.2
Kent	56.2	47.2	NR	62.4	101.4	101.8	116.9
Kirkland	28.8	19.2	49.1	49.0	49.0	44.3	48.4
Lake Forest Park	18.7	22.8	43.6	36.3	44.8	43.6	43.5
Lynnwood	60.9	62.2	NR	NR	NR	25.4	156.7
Marysville	33.4	32.1	NR	NR	NR	13.7	74.1
Medina	12.2	12.8	24.6	35.3	27.5	31.4	34.6
Mercer Island	14.9	18.8	NR	30.9	31.9	42.0	42.4
Mill Creek	29.1	22.9	41.6	41.2	49.3	44.5	45.3
Mukilteo	29.4	25.7	NR	NR	NR	9.5	45.2
Normandy Park	28.3	33.7	43.5	36.1	31.2	33.6	33.0
North Bend	42.7	43.9	NR	NR	73.4	83.2	54.8
Puyallup	68.1	74.0	164.8	154.6	146.1	143.8	138.3
Redmond	30.2	25.3	46.2	52.6	54.7	57.1	56.0
Renton	51.0	49.3	88.4	88.5	88.4	98.6	97.8
Seattle	60.2	58.1	92.0	95.7	105.2	96.9	96.9
Snoqualmie	20.2	13.7	28.2	25.4	32.6	29.7	37.1

Sumner	64.6	59.8	102.5	105.5	116.1	114.4	105.8
Tukwila	169.9	163.3	298.1	296.2	275.7	297.6	269.0
University Place	32.6	26.4	58.7	54.1	50.0	51.9	51.1
Yarrow Point	4.0	10.9	14.2	4.9	16.7	15.7	19.2

NR – Not yet reporting NIBRS data to WASPC.