Lowest Crime Rate in Florida in 43 Years. FDLE released its 2013 Annual Uniform Crime Report, which showed that Florida’s crime rate dropped 4.7 percent compared to 2012, marking the lowest rate in the 43 years the department has collected crime statistics. There were 27,380 fewer crimes in 2013 than in 2012. The total number of crimes dropped 3.8 percent last year. The number of violent crimes (murder, forcible sex offenses, robbery and aggravated assault) decreased by 2.4 percent. Homicide was down 3.9 percent, and forcible sex offenses dropped 2.8 percent. Robbery dropped 2.8 percent, and aggravated assault was down 2.1 percent. Non-violent crime (burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft) decreased by 4 percent. Burglary was down 9.6 percent. Larceny decreased 1.8 percent. Motor vehicle thefts decreased 6.5 percent. There were 904,634 arrests made last year—almost 2,500 per day.

Inmate Escape Scheme Busted. FDLE, in partnership with the Bay County Sheriff’s Office, Panama City Police Department, and US Marshals Service, arrested two Department of Corrections (DOC) inmates who forged court documents to secure their escape from Franklin Correctional Institution in late September and early October of 2013. Both were serving life sentences without the possibility of parole as a result of murder convictions in Orange County. Charles Walker and Joseph Jenkins were arrested without incident at the Coconut Grove Motor Inn, in Panama City Beach, on October 19, 2013.

Pursuant to further investigation by FDLE, Walker, Jenkins and four other current or former DOC inmates were charged with additional offenses related to the creation of the prison escape scheme: Nydeed Nashaddai was charged with conspiracy to commit escape and principal to escape; Jeffrey Forbes was charged with forgery, uttering a forged instrument, and conspiracy to commit escape; Willie Slater, Jr., was charged with principal to escape, conspiracy to commit escape, uttering a forged instrument and tampering; and Terrance Goodman was charged with harboring a fugitive and conspiracy to commit escape. The investigation determined that Nashaddai developed the escape scheme and taught the other inmates who ultimately orchestrated their own escapes. The FDLE investigation identified several loopholes in the county clerk’s system and led to sweeping changes to prevent future escapes from occurring.

Prescription Drug Deaths on the Decline. The department released the 2012 Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons Report compiled by the Florida Medical Examiners Commission. This report showed that prescription drug deaths fell by 9.9 percent, while deaths caused by oxycodone plunged by 41 percent when compared with 2011. The report also showed that, in 2012, the deaths of 8,330 Floridians were drug-related, down from 9,135 in 2011. Despite the drop in prescription drug deaths, deaths related to prescription drugs continue to occur more frequently than those related to illicit drugs. Oxycodone, alprazolam, ethyl alcohol, cocaine, methadone, morphine, hydrocodone, and diazepam were the drugs determined to have caused the most deaths in 2012.
Silver Alert Partnership helps find Missing Seniors. In February 2014, the Florida Silver Alert Program was expanded to allow for the display of the images of missing seniors on lottery ticket terminals at convenience stores. In the first month following the expansion of the program, four seniors were found as a direct result of this initiative by FDLE. The very first time a terminal displayed an alert; a convenience store clerk recognized a missing 89-year-old man in the store and contacted law enforcement.

The Program was initiated by a Governor’s executive order on Oct. 8, 2008 and codified into law by the Florida legislature in 2011. It is a standardized system to aid local law enforcement in the rescue of an elderly person with an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (such as dementia or Alzheimer’s disease) who goes missing. The plan calls for the broadcast of information via the media and highway message signs (when a vehicle is involved) to enlist citizens in the search for an endangered senior.

Florida Sex Offender Registry unveils Campus Search. The 2013 Florida Legislature allocated funding for FDLE to create a “University / Campus Search” as part of Florida's existing sexual offender and predator website. Florida's registration law requires sex offenders and predators to report higher education enrollment, employment, or vocational activities to local sheriffs' offices. The search feature is available on FDLE’s website and allows citizens to search for sex offenders who are working, living, or attending school on college campuses and institutions of higher learning throughout Florida.

Florida sheriffs' offices provide this information to the institution or university and to FDLE for inclusion in the registry. Using the new search function, citizens can obtain a list of all sex offenders at a particular institution or campus. Links included within the search allow for display of the offender’s photograph, offense and residential information. There are approximately 65,000 sex offenders and predators on Florida's Sex Offender Registry and more than 600 have active registration information involving postsecondary institutions. Visit http://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/homepage.do to search the registry.

Florida Law Enforcement Analyst Academy wins National Award. FDLE’s Florida Law Enforcement Analyst Academy was recognized by the International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) for significant contributions to the advancement of intelligence analysis. FDLE developed the academy in 2003 to provide uniform training for law enforcement analysts. It was the first academy of its kind in the nation. Attendees learn analytical skills that allow them to work in partnership with sworn law enforcement officers to successfully conduct complex criminal investigations. The skills learned are useful in assisting law enforcement managers with strategic planning and resource allocation. More than 500 analysts representing state, local, military, private sector, and out-of-state agencies have attended this training.