



My Public Safety Plan

Safe Streets and Neighborhoods

A safe community is the most important priority of a mayor. The City of Fresno has made good progress this decade in reducing crime and improving our fire fighting capacity, yet our crime rate remains too high and our fire department has a long way to go before it can reclaim the status it once held as a model for other fire departments in the state and nation.

I want every resident in every neighborhood to be safe. As Mayor, I will support aggressive efforts to apprehend and prosecute criminals. I will encourage programs for those who wish to separate themselves from a life of crime to ensure they have an alternative path forward, and I will ensure protection of life and property through an exemplary fire department.

THE LONG TERM FIGHT AGAINST CRIME: JOBS AND EDUCATION

I want to first of all stress my unwavering commitment to supporting the growth of the economy and educational attainment in our community. The long term fight against crime in Fresno can only be won by improving the economy and making sure our kids succeed in school. There is a direct correlation between employment rates and crime rates, which means that as we lower our unemployment rates in Fresno, we will see lower incidents of crime.

It's been said, "The best way to stop a bullet is with a job." That's why I've dedicated the last ten years of my career to improving the local economy and helping people get the training they need to get good-paying jobs. As the Mayor of Fresno, I will be more determined than anyone to make sure Fresno's police and fire departments are well equipped to protect our city, but I will also lead the charge to address the root causes of crime.

PUBLIC SAFETY PLATFORM

Anticipated fiscal constraints in the next few years will require that we ensure that mission-critical activities of our police and fire departments are prioritized, that we seek innovative ways to support these mission critical activities through volunteers, and that we ensure that we are taking every step to maximize the efficient delivery of services, including consolidation.

MY 10-POINT PLAN FOR PUBLIC SAFETY:

1. Increase Number of Sworn Officers

Within the constraints of fiscal discipline, I will continue to increase the number of sworn police officers until we are at the 90th percentile of our peer cities in California.¹

2. Consolidate County and City Law Enforcement Activities

I will work with the County of Fresno to consolidate as many police functions as is practical and apply the cost efficiencies of consolidation to fund an increase in officers and to fund the engineering required to improve public safety facilities.

3. Improve Public Safety Facilities

When a consolidation plan has been finalized, I will support investment in improved public safety facilities, including a police and fire communications center, fleet turnover, training facilities and maintenance facilities.

4. Improve Ranking and Response Times for Fresno Fire

Within the constraints of fiscal discipline, I will support all improvements needed by our Fire Department to attain Class 2 ISO ranking and achieve a response time of four minutes, 90 percent of the time.

5. Continue Graffiti Abatement

I will ensure the successful continuation of the current graffiti abatement initiative.

6. Improve Volunteer Support for Police and Fire

I will work to add volunteers in support roles for the Police and Fire Departments through programs like the Fresno Citizen Corps.

7. Partner with Neighborhood Resource Centers

There is a strong network of “neighborhood resource centers” growing in Fresno thanks to the work of business, education and church leaders. I will ensure our police and fire units are working closely with neighborhood leaders to achieve public safety objectives.

8. Support Job Creation and Education Attainment

As mentioned above, jobs and education are the most effective, long-term crime fighting tools we have. Please see my five-point plan on economic development and job creation for specific recommendations to grow our local economy (available at www.ashley4mayor.com, select “Policy Papers”).

9. Expand the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Initiative (MGPI)

In my first 100 days as Mayor, I will launch an effort to double the number of gang members and “wannabe” gang members who elect to join the MGPI program so they can be helped to chart a law-abiding path for themselves. I will seek support from the private sector to help support this effort.

10. Develop a Plan to Safeguard Community Trust in Law Enforcement

Within my first 100 days as Mayor, I will convene a group that includes the President of the City Council, the Chief of Police, the President of the Fresno Police Officers Association and three community leaders, to seek agreement on a mechanism that enables us to safeguard the trust between our community and our police department.

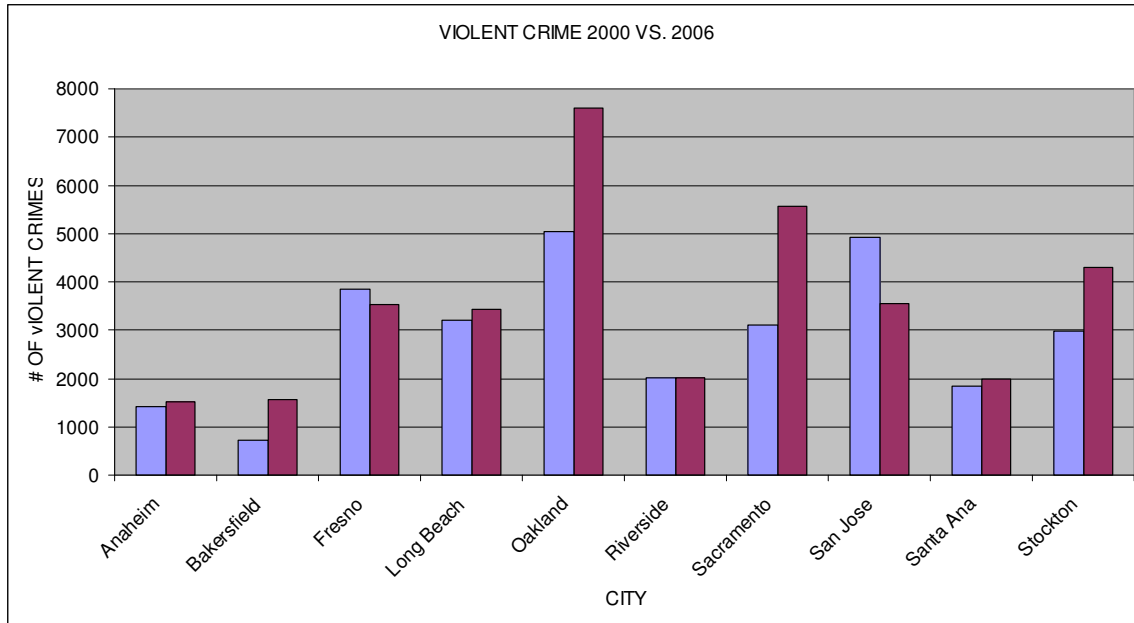
¹ Peer cities are defined as those with population ranging from 250,000 to 1 million in California and include Anaheim, Bakersfield, Long Beach, Oakland, Riverside, Sacramento, San Jose, Santa Ana and Stockton.

BACKING UP MY 10-POINT PLAN WITH DATA AND ANALYSIS

My 10-Point Plan for Public Safety is based on an extensive analysis of crime rates, population/officer ratios and unemployment rates across Fresno and its ten peer cities in California. The following pages provide a summary of that analysis.

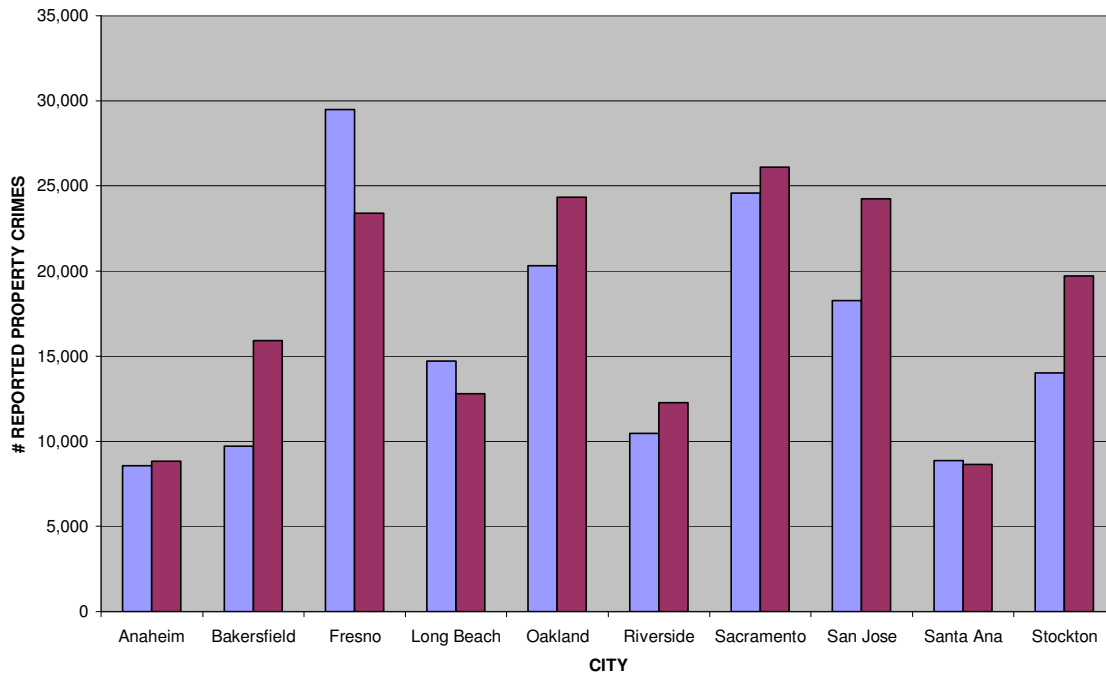
CRIME ANALYSIS

As shown in the two graphs below, the City of Fresno is the only city within its California peer group that has seen an absolute decline in both violent crime and property crime since 2000. San Jose has seen a decrease in violent crime. Long Beach and Santa Ana have experienced declines in property crime, but Fresno is the only city to see a decline in both.



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics

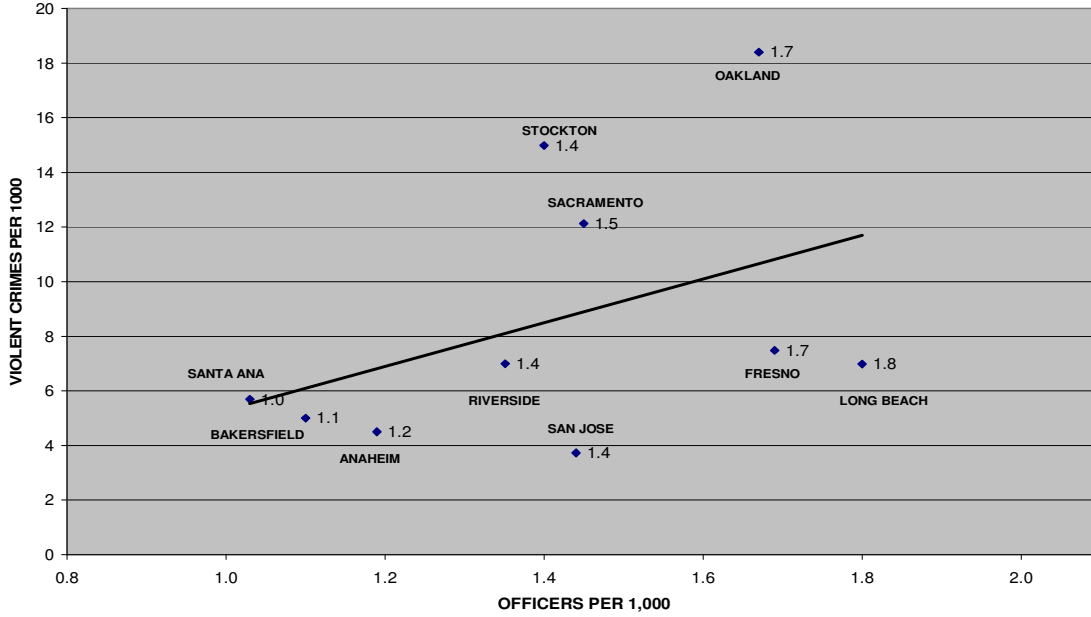
PROPERTY CRIMES 2000 VS 2006



Source: *FBI Uniform Crime Statistics*

If you look at the relationship between the incidents of violent crime and the number of sworn officers among Fresno's peer cities, you'll see that the cities with the lowest rate of violent crime are the cities with the lowest number of sworn officers.

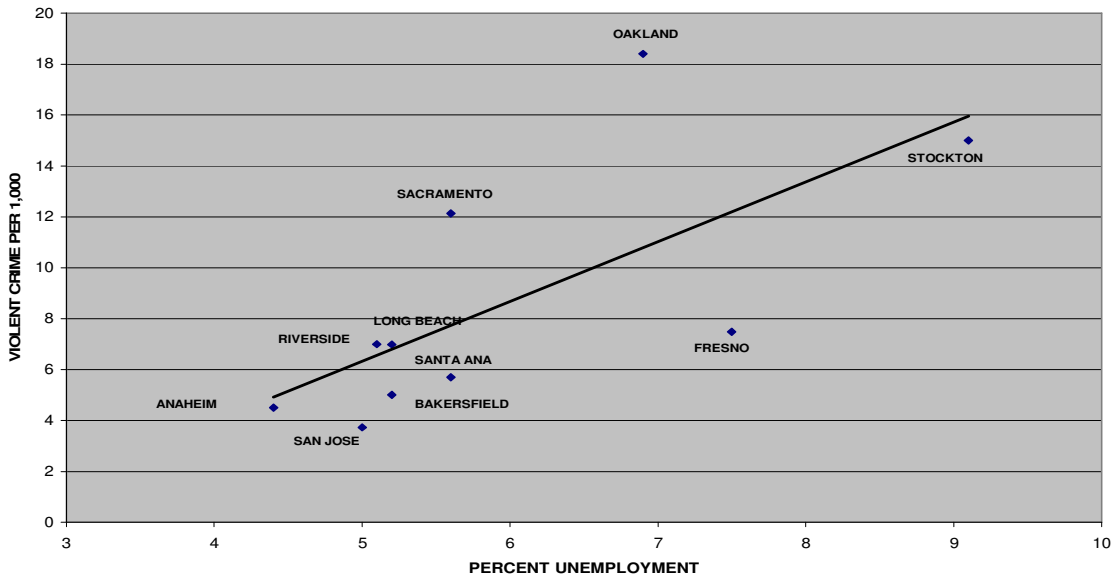
OFFICERS COMPARED TO VIOLENT CRIME 2006



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics, U.S. Census and city budgets

Of course, no one would suggest that reducing the number of sworn officers would result in better crime control. What is far more likely, as suggested by the graph below, is that the cities with the lowest rate of unemployment and poverty have the lowest rate of crime. Therefore, those cities require fewer officers.

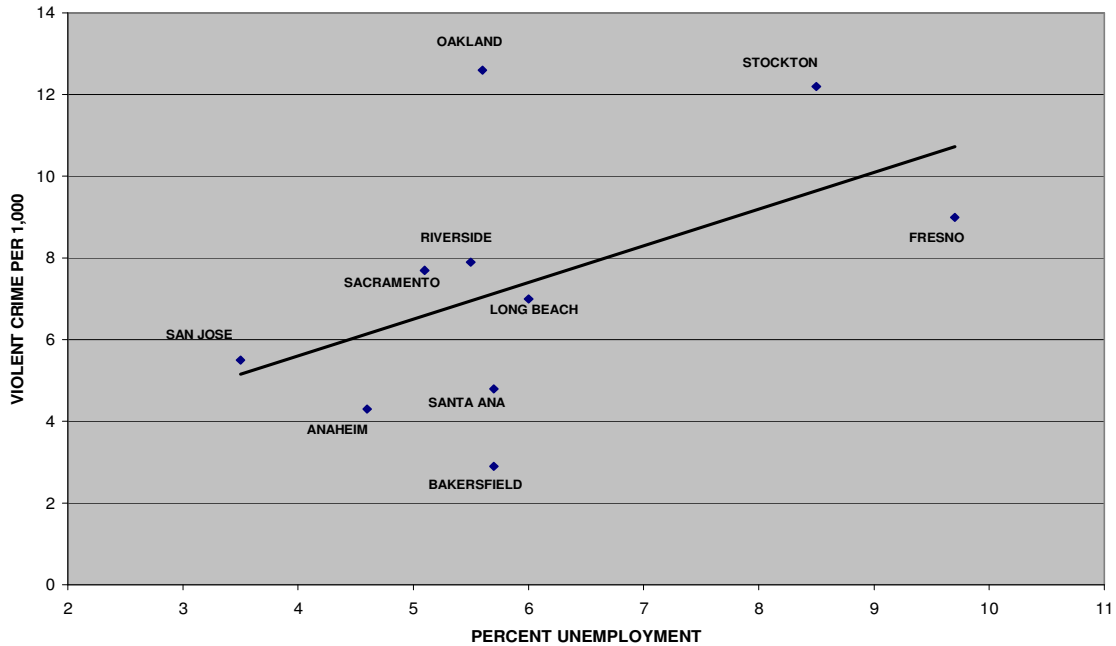
VIOLENT CRIME VS UNEMPLOYMENT 2006



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics, U.S. Census, and city budgets

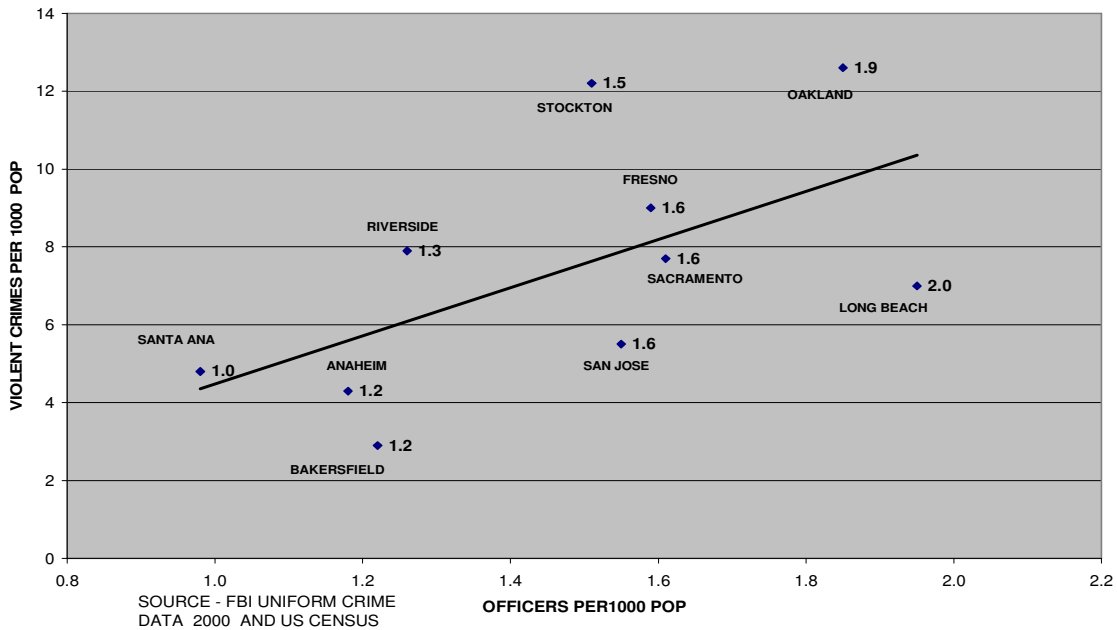
Let's look at the data from the two charts above, which compare the number of officers and incidents of violent crime and then unemployment rates and incidents of violent crime for the year 2006. Now, let's compare that data to the same information for the year 2000:

VIOLENT CRIME VS UNEMPLOYMENT 2000



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics, U.S. Census, and city budgets

OFFICERS COMPARED TO VIOLENT CRIME 2000



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics, U.S. Census, and city budgets

WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW FROM LOOKING AT THIS DATA?

- The pattern of relationship between unemployment and incidents of violent crime hasn't changed between 2000 and 2006. In both years, most of the cities with the lowest unemployment experience the lowest rate of crime.
- There is a clear correlation between Fresno's reduced incidents of violent crime and its reduced rate of unemployment. As the rate of unemployment declined by 20%, from 9.8% in 2000 to 7.8% in 2006, violent crime dropped by 17% from 9.0 incidents per thousand to 7.5 incidents per thousand.
- But, there is more to it than just the economy. The City of Fresno is experiencing rates of violent crime that are comparable to those in Long Beach, Santa Ana and Riverside, despite the fact that our unemployment rate remains significantly higher than theirs. Clearly, good policing is a major part of the equation.
- It needs to be noted that the City's performance in crime improvement has coincided with an increase in the number of sworn officers per thousand, from 1.6 per thousand in 2000 to 1.72 in 2006. Fresno, in 2006, ranked second only to Long Beach in number of officers per thousand. It bears mentioning that this high ranking does not come without cost: Fresno spends about 54% of its general fund on police services, the highest percentage among its California peers.
- Despite the significant reduction in violent and property crime since 2000, Fresno's crime rates remain too high. We should aspire to have rates in both categories that are in the lower 25th percentile of our peers in California.

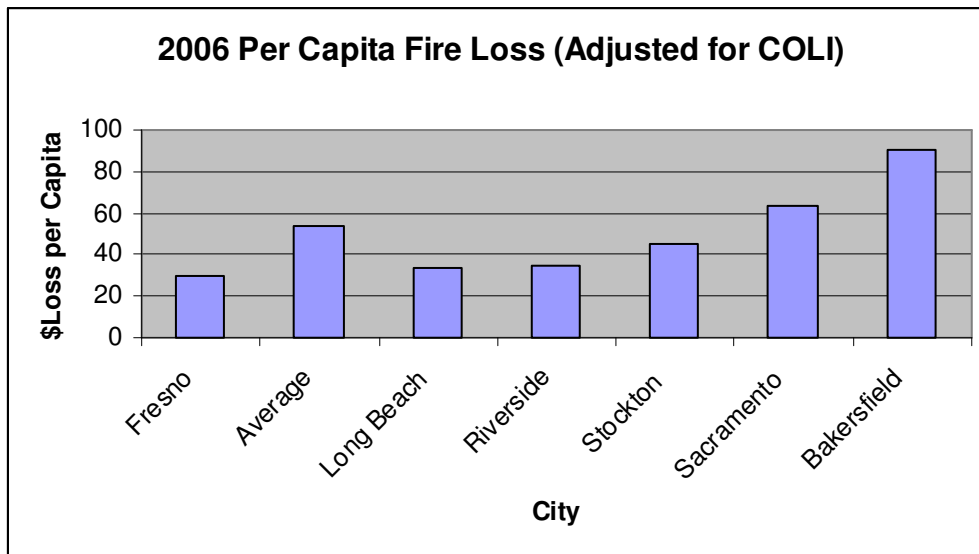
Three variables appear to be contributing to our improvement to date: (1) good policing, (2) number of sworn officers per thousand, and (3) the health of the economy. It is impossible to isolate the impact of these three variables, but it is reasonable to conclude that continued attention to all three variables is in the best interests of the residents of Fresno. Good policing is obviously essential to continued progress, and at least until such time as we have brought our unemployment rate to the average of the State or below, it makes sense for the City of Fresno to be near the top of its peers in the number of sworn officers per thousand population.

One more thought on the police department. For several years there has been an impasse between the Mayor and the City Council over the appointment of an independent auditor. I believe it is possible for all the parties to come together around this central issue: there is a critical need to safeguard the trust between the community and its police department. History has taught us that communities suffer great damage when this trust breaks down, and that the incidents that cause such breakdowns are often unpredictable. The best path to prevention is to have a mechanism in place to stem such a breakdown at its inception.

FIRE FIGHTING ANALYSIS

Analysis of our fire fighting capacity relative to that of our peers is somewhat more difficult than comparing public safety capacity largely because of the geography and density variations of our peer cities. There is however, a means of evaluating the relative capacity of our Fire Department. The Insurance Service Office (ISO) provides a grading system for fire departments that ranges from 1 to 10, with Class 1 representing exemplary protection and Class 10 meaning that the department does not pass minimum standards of protection.

Twenty-five years ago, the City of Fresno had a Class 1 ranking. In the ensuing twenty years, significant under-funding of the Fire Department, as reported in the 2003 “Meeting the Challenge” report and the 2004 Public Safety Commission analysis, caused a decline in the City’s ranking to Class 4. Significant performance improvements have improved that picture. As shown below, in 2006 the per capita fire loss for the City of Fresno (adjusted for cost of living differential) was the lowest among its California peers. While that is good progress, there is clearly room for continued improvement. I am committed to the attainment of Class 2 ranking during my term as Mayor.



Source: *Standards for Cover, Fresno Fire Department, November 2007*

Response time is a critical factor in the performance of fire departments. Given that 85% of the calls answered by our Fire Department are for provision of medical aid, improved response times are critical to saving lives. They are also critical to saving property. They even affect our economy. Achievement of Class 2 ISO ranking would have the effect of reducing commercial insurance rates by three to eight percent. Equally important, history points out that businesses that burn down do not usually re-open, so avoiding such fire losses equates to protecting jobs.

Our Fire Department has set a target response time of four minutes (90 percent of the time) for first-arriving units (8 minutes for full effective response time). That’s about 20% faster than our response time in 2006. I am committed to attainment of that target at the earliest possible date.