A review of statewide index crimes reported the past several years identified many instances where there is a significant difference in the number of aggravated battery/aggravated assault totals reported by agencies with similar populations. Though the demographics of a community may impact the levels of criminal activity, the significance in and the number of these disparities dictated the need for a review of reporting guidelines for this crime category.

Due to the complexity of Federal definitions and guidelines, it is not possible to identify every possible aggravated battery/aggravated assault scenario in the Index Crime reporting guidelines. Generalities, including an offense definition, are provided along with specifics for the more common scenarios. Additionally, the Index Crime data collection form, I-UCR offense code resource spreadsheet, and the Index Crime reporting guidelines provide a listing or identifies UCR codes to be reported in the aggravated battery/aggravated assault category.

The recent review of reporting guidelines identified that two Illinois Compiled Statutes offenses have historically been omitted from the aggravated battery/aggravated assault crime category though the offenses should be reported. The offenses share the same UCR code (1415) and are:

Aggravated Discharge of a Firearm 720-5/24-1.2

Aggravated Discharge of a Machine Gun or Firearm with Silencer 720-5/24-1.2-5

Both of these offenses meet the UCR definition of aggravated battery/aggravated assault and should be reported in index crimes. Some agencies have been correctly reporting these offenses; however, it is believed that many are not. This may account for some of the disparities found in the number of offenses reported.

The offense of aggravated battery/aggravated assault is a crime against person, and each victim of either one of the aggravated discharge offenses must be scored and reported. It is incorrect to report only one aggravated battery/aggravated offense if there are multiple victims in the incident.

Examples of incidents and how the offenses of aggravated battery/aggravated assault should be reported follow.

* A vehicle passed by a group of five subjects standing in a parking lot. An occupant of the vehicle fired multiple shots at the group, striking and causing minor injuries to two of the subjects. Report five (5) aggravated battery/aggravated assaults. There is no hierarchy between the offenses of aggravated battery and aggravated assault. Instead the number of victims for both offenses are combined and reported in the aggravated battery/aggravated assault offense category.
* Gunshots from an unknown origin were fired into the kitchen of a residence occupied by seven people. None of the occupants were injured. Report seven (7) aggravated battery/aggravated assaults.

Per the FBI, discretion must be used in identifying the number of victims when a firearm is discharged into a building. Only report the number of persons who can be reasonably considered victims based on their proximity to the location where the shots were fired.

* Gunshots from an unknown origin were fired in to the living room of a residence occupied by five people. One adult was in the living room. Four children were sleeping in upstairs bedrooms. Report one (1) aggravated battery/aggravated assault. The four children cannot be reasonably considered victims based on their location.
* An assailant pulls a handgun from his pocket and begins shooting randomly at four customers and two employees in the checkout area of a grocery store. There are ten additional customers and employees throughout the store. No one is injured and the assailant flees the store. Report six (6) aggravated battery/aggravated assaults. The additional customers and employees throughout the store cannot reasonably be considered victims based on their locations.

Examples of incidents where no aggravated battery/aggravated assault offense(s) are to be reported follow.

* A vehicle passed by a group of five subjects standing in a parking lot. An occupant of the vehicle fired multiple shots at the group, causing fatal injuries to three of the group. The remaining two subjects suffered minor injuries. After the application of the Hierarchy Rule, only the three criminal homicides are reported. The aggravated battery/aggravated assaults to the remaining two subjects are not reported.
* Surveillance cameras showed an unknown assailant on foot who fired several shots through the front window of a Family Dollar store at 4:00 a.m. Since the business had been closed for several hours, it was reasonable to believe that the building was not occupied. An aggravated battery/aggravated assault is not reported.
* An officer responded to a report of or heard shots fired. There was no one in the area when the officer(s) arrived, and no signs of damage or evidence that could be associated with the discharge of a firearm. An aggravated battery/aggravated assault is not reported.

Another example of an aggravated battery/aggravated assault offense that is not specifically identified in the reporting guidelines and may be underreported is one that occurs in conjunction with an arson. If a structure is occupied when an arson occurs, an arson and an aggravated battery/aggravated assault have occurred and must be reported. Both offenses are reported because arson is exempt from the Hierarchy Rule. Arson offenses are always reported, followed by the most serious of the remaining offenses in a multi-offense incident.

The occupant(s) do not need to have suffered any injury during an arson incident to be classified as a victim of aggravated battery/aggravated assault. The location of an occupant(s) in the structure in relation to the location of the fire is irrelevant. Some occupants may escape from harm while other occupants incur injuries during an arson incident. All occupants, regardless of injury, are reported as victims of aggravated battery/aggravated assault.

The Index Crime guidelines will be modified to reflect the scenarios above in the aggravated battery/aggravated assault section. The Index Crime data collection form and the I-UCR offense code resource spreadsheet will be modified to identify UCR offense code 1415, Aggravated Discharge of a Firearm and Aggravated Discharge of a Machine Gun or Firearm with Silencer, as reportable offenses in the aggravated battery/aggravated assault crime category.

The verification of 2018 Index Crimes will begin March 1 and close March 31. Information on the verification process will be posted on the I-UCR web page in mid-February; however, agencies are requested to begin the review of case data and to submit modifications to aggravated battery/aggravated assault statistics that be necessary after incorporating the direction provided in this notice. It is the responsibility of each agency to report crime statistics as accurately and uniformly as possible. It is the I-UCR Program’s responsibility to provide reporting guidelines and other resources to assist agencies achieve success in these tasks. The I-UCR Program anticipates the identification and correction of omissions in guidelines for reporting aggravated battery/aggravated assault offenses will assist reporting agencies and the I-UCR Program to achieve a higher level of compliance in the reporting of these offenses. A specific review of aggravated battery/aggravated assaults will be conducted following the verification of 2018 data. It is anticipated the review will show the substantial discrepancies in the number of aggravated battery/aggravated assaults reported will be reduced without the need for agency audits.

*Crime in Illinois 2018* will address what may be a resulting spike in the number of aggravated battery/aggravated assaults reported by an agency in 2018 as compared to the 2017 reporting year. Contact the I-UCR Program Manager, Ms. Terri Hickman, at 217/557-6482 with questions.