Lewiston police call most reports of rape false

Rape victims in this city might find themselves filing their report with an officer who believes most such reports are false. In separate interviews with...

By The Associated Press

LEWISTON, Idaho — Rape victims in this city might find themselves filing their report with an officer who believes most such reports are false.

In separate interviews with the Lewiston Morning Tribune, three of the department’s lead officers, Capt. Allan Sharp, Lt. Alan Johnson and Lt. Tom Greene, said they believe at least 70 percent of women who report sexual assault aren’t telling the truth.

When asked why a woman would file a false report, Sharp, Johnson, Greene and Detective Larry Stuck listed revenge, regret, attention seeking and alcohol.

However, according to the department’s statistics, about 23 percent of rape reports over the past five years were classified as unfounded. Nationally, FBI statistics show less than 8 percent of rapes reported to police are fabricated.

Rape-victim advocates said if officers believe most rape claims are false, they may be less aggressive in investigating the crimes and less likely to pursue charges.

And knowing they may not be believed by police, rape victims may be less willing to report, the advocates say.

“With the Lewiston police, it’s like, ‘We’re going to question you, but we’re not sure if we’re going to believe you,’ ” said Melissa Kinzer, a sexual-assault advocate at Rogers Counseling Center in Clarkston, across the Snake River from
Lewiston in Washington’s Asotin County. “It’s a different mind-set. The quality of care and sensitivity to victims is different; it’s not a nurturing environment.”

Becky Balliet, national volunteer coordinator for the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network in Washington, D.C., said the high percentage of false reports claimed by the Lewiston officers doesn’t add up.

“Unless Lewiston is in an alternate universe, this seems way off the map,” Balliet said.

Stuck, the Lewiston department’s primary sex-crimes investigator, said he didn’t know how many reports are fabricated but said most are false.

The Associated Press