



The NIRCL Update

Fall 2019

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory



IL State Legislators Visit the Crime Lab, Oct 8, 2019: pictured left to right: Rep. Tom Weber, Rep. Tom Morrison, Sen. Julie Morrison, Sen. Laura Fine, Rep. Mark Walker, Sen. Dan McConche, Rep. Daniel Didech, Rep. Michelle Mussman, Rep. Sam Yingling, Rep. McConche's daughter Sophia and Rep. Mary Edly-Allen

In this issue:

- Director's Message
- Staffing Update
- Casework Trends
- Training Corner
- Laboratory Communication
- Impactful Evidence

Director's Message:

Recently signed **Cannabis Regulation and Taxation Act (CRTA)** scheduled to become effective January 1st, contains language that conflicts with other cannabis legislation making it uncertain how the lab should move forward to test cannabis related products for prosecution purposes. Our laboratory chemists **Gina Havlik** and **Lindsay Simpson** have been working with their counterparts in the **ISP** and the **DuPage County Forensic Labs** to recommend edits to the CRTA and ISP personnel are expected to present the edits to legislature during the fall "veto" session. As Assistant Lab Director **Mark Milford** had recent contact with some regional legislators, he was able to coordinate the invitation of several legislators from our area who visited the laboratory. They were impressed with our operation and were interested to hear about the suggested edits to the CRTA and have been helping us get the proposed edits to the right people in the legislative process. At this point it may be a bit of a waiting game before we fully



The NIRCL Update

Fall 2019

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory

understand the impacts of the legislation and we can make informed decisions on how best to move forward with our procedures. Stay tuned.

In September the laboratory was assessed to the most updated set of accreditation standards; **ISO/IEC 17025:2017**. There were no findings of non-conformance to the new standards! The lab should be receiving new accreditation certificates soon. Congratulations to **Mark Milford** and his Quality Team members **Michelle Thomas** and **Gary Lind** and to the entire lab for having policies and procedures up-to-date and for being able to demonstrate compliance with the new standards.

Welcome to **Chief Mark Turvey** and the **Romeoville Police Department**. The department joined the laboratory membership on September 1, 2019. With this addition, our laboratory now serves a population of nearly **1.6 million** citizens!



Latent Print Specialist Karen Duquette continues to be a great ambassador to our member agencies. Karen recently represented the lab at the Winnetka Police Department's Open House. Thank you for the kind words Chief Hornstein!

Congratulations and thank you to Mark Milford for his 30 years of dedication to the lab!



Thank you for your support of the laboratory.

Philip T. Kinsey, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Staffing Update:

As shown in **Casework Trends** below, our current staff continues to excel at effectively processing the evidence submitted to the lab. As mentioned at the last General meeting and in the last Update, when the time comes, the



The NIRCL Update

Fall 2019

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next additional employee will likely be slated for our Firearms section which will also provide relief for the Latent Prints section as we have one analyst currently dividing their time between both sections.

Casework Trends:

Third quarter casework numbers are very similar to those from quarter two; which is outstanding because the quarter 2 numbers were excellent! **Great work NIRCL Scientists!!**

	Requests Received		Requests Completed		Final Backlog		Average TATs (days)	
	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q2	2019 Q3
Chemistry	589	620	568	636	57	42	6	5
DNA	243	268	302	300	62	70	31	34
Latent Prints	341	364	374	374	87	77	33	24
Firearms	288	240	276	218	63	86	21	35
Toxicology	161	126	156	130	17	13	11	10

Training Corner:

The laboratory's first **Overview of the Lab** presentation is scheduled for November 14th at 9:00am at the Vernon Hills Police Department Training Room. There will be 20- to 30-minute presentations from each major section of the laboratory; the entire overview, including discussions, should last 2 to 3 hours. Please contact the laboratory (clerical@nircl.org) to reserve a space at this or an upcoming presentation. Seating may be limited.

Please also find information about upcoming training opportunities at http://nircl.org/home/training_corner.

Laboratory Communication:

Thank you for making better use of the personnel directory in our phone system! This has been very helpful and has further reduced interruptions.

If you would like a list of staff phone extensions, please contact us at clerical@nircl.org and we will be happy to send you one.

We have received feedback that our phone system can sometimes kick callers out of the system before they can contact a staff member or leave a message. Evidently poor cell phone signals can sometimes trick our system into thinking it heard a signal to hang up. If this happens to you, please call right back or call when you have a better service signal.

Thank you for continuing to use the clerical@nircl.org email address when requesting information for non-urgent matters. Please continue to let us know what you need along with any pertinent information that would help us get you your information more quickly. This has been very helpful in reducing interruptions to our scientists in the laboratory. As always, for urgent matters, please call the lab directly.



The NIRCL Update

Fall 2019

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory

Impactful Evidence:

New DNA Analysis Software - On October 1st, the DNA section brought on-line new software (**STRmix**) enabling the improved interpretation of certain mixed DNA profiles. With the use of STRmix, the statistics reported will be presented as **likelihood ratios** instead of **frequencies**. Please contact our DNA analysts if you have questions about this reporting. This implementation will help develop more useable data from the evidence you submit! STRmix interpretation requires known standards for comparisons, so **please continue** to submit those with your evidence.

Drug v. Hemp Cannabis Field Test Kits - Current field test kits, commonly known as the Duquenois-Levine Reagent, cannot differentiate between drug-type and industrial hemp. Kits that can make this distinction, developed in Switzerland, are now produced by a Florida company and can be purchased at <https://syndicatechemistry.com/>.

New NIBIN System Operating Standards – A recent operating standard implemented by ATF is to process and enter ballistic evidence into NIBIN within two business days of receipt from the submitting agency. In order to reach that standard, we are asking for help from you.

One challenge has to do with submitted firearms that include requests for latent print and DNA testing. Often, these additional requests are for the prudent collection of potential evidence versus a need for immediate testing. Processing this evidence in two different sections before it reaches Firearms for entry into NIBIN in the required time frame is next to impossible. *Here's how you can help:*

- **If your agency can collect latent print or DNA evidence from the firearm, do so and submit that evidence only when necessary.** An instructional guide for the collection of DNA evidence from Firearms is found at the end of this Update and at: http://nircl.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/GunHandlerDNASwabChartNIRCL.29544131.pdf.
- **Submit only firearms that are suspected of having been used in a crime.** It is not uncommon for guns turned into law enforcement by relatives of deceased family to be submitted to the laboratory.
- **If your agency has access to a shooting range, submit two test-fires.** However, please consider submitting test-fires regularly. Submitting a large number of test-fires at one time can easily overwhelm our ability to adhere to the minimum operating standards.

As a reminder, revolvers, single-shot or bolt-action rifles, shot guns in gauges other than 12 are not typically test-fired for entry into NIBIN. That said, there are often exigent circumstances that require consideration and we are open to these possibilities.

Assistance from larger agencies or those that submit a lot of evidence will be the most impactful, but any help is greatly appreciated. With your assistance, NIRCL will be well on our way to meeting and exceeding these federally mandated operating standards. **Thank you!**

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact Phil Kinsey at pkinsey@nircl.org, (847) 362-0676 x102 or (406) 493-8083.

Stay safe and thanks for reading!



The NIRCL Update

Fall 2019

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory

Gun Handler DNA Recommended Swabbing Areas



- Primary Swabbing Areas
- Other Possible Swabbing Areas
- Swab Trigger Only if Grooved

- ▶ Use Sterile Swabs, Sterile Water and Clean Technique
- ▶ Use Two to Three Swabs For Larger Areas
- ▶ Place Swabs From Different Areas Into Their Own Swab Box
- ▶ Label Each Swab Box With The Area It Was Collected From
- ▶ Package All Swab Boxes From One Gun Together

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