



The NIRCL Update

Summer 2020

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory

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Two kilograms of MDMA recently submitted by Cook County Sheriff's Department Investigator John Riggio

Director's Message:

All laboratory staff returned to working full schedules and the lab is again accepting evidence on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Staff continue to wear masks when speaking or moving about the laboratory and continue to complete a daily Employee Health Screening Survey. I'm happy to report that all employees and their families are well. I hope yours are too.

Please review the laboratory [Annual Report](#) which was posted to the website on June 26, 2020 in lieu of the Laboratory's Annual Meeting. We look forward to our next opportunity to meet with you all in person.

In that report a few people are specially acknowledged for their high level of support of the lab. They include: Lake County Assistant State's Attorneys **Jeff Pavletic** and **Ken LaRue** and Arlington Heights Police Department Evidence Custodian **Phil Lorenz**. The extra effort made by these individuals, help the lab meet its mission of providing Accurate, Objective and Timely Forensic Services. That effort is **greatly** appreciated!

Thank you for continuing to keep your face masks on **at all times** while visiting the lab! We want to keep everyone healthy.

Thank you for your support of the laboratory.

Philip T. Kinsey, Ph.D.
Executive Director



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Staffing Update:

Laboratory staff are being exceedingly considerate about adjusting their schedules to maximize safety and social distancing. All staff are back to working full schedules with most staff working between 4 and 8 hours per week from home to minimize the number of staff in the lab at any one time.

Casework Trends:

In this report, data for the first and second quarters of 2020 are presented below. Case backlogs and turn-around times (TATs) were impacted by operational responses to the pandemic. However, with full schedules for all staff reinstated during the last week of the second quarter, those limited impacts will be remedied soon and there are no long-term concerns about backlogs and turn-around times.

	Requests Received		Requests Completed		Final Backlog		Average TATs (days)	
	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q1	2020 Q2
Chemistry	580	318	569	334	41	32	8	19
DNA	254	222	292	273	103	70	43	46
Latent Prints	279	289	326	235	24	71	18	18
Firearms	186	179	217	161	35	99	13	22
Toxicology	96	90	93	91	16	21	9	19

Training Corner:

Overview of the Lab

The laboratory has received good feedback from the attendees at the quarterly *Overview of the Lab* presentations and we intend to continue with these 2-hour presentations but on-line using the Zoom Meeting platform. Our next scheduled presentation is at **9:00 am on August 14th**. If you are interested in joining our next presentation, please contact the laboratory at clerical@nircl.org and let us know the names **and** email addresses of those who would like to attend.

PowerPoint presentations for these overviews have been made available at http://nircl.org/home/training_corner. Please contact the lab if you have any questions or need clarification on any of the materials.

Continue to look at the website for upcoming training opportunities!



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Laboratory Communication:

Thank you for continuing to use the clerical@nircl.org email address to schedule evidence drop-off appointments and when requesting information for non-urgent matters. In your requests for information please 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.

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.

Impactful Evidence:

Milestone –

The Firearm section recently logged their 2,000th NIBIN hit! Congratulations!



Pictured left and wearing this season's fashion favorite are from left to right: Gary Lind, Franni Tempesta and Tony Spadafora.

They promised they were all wearing big smiles behind their masks.

Reminders –

Latent Print Evidence

The laboratory is beginning to see an increase in Latent Print evidence submitted in which laboratory guidelines are not being followed. Those guidelines are found at

http://nircl.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/FPSubmissionGuidelines041218.10173235.pdf.

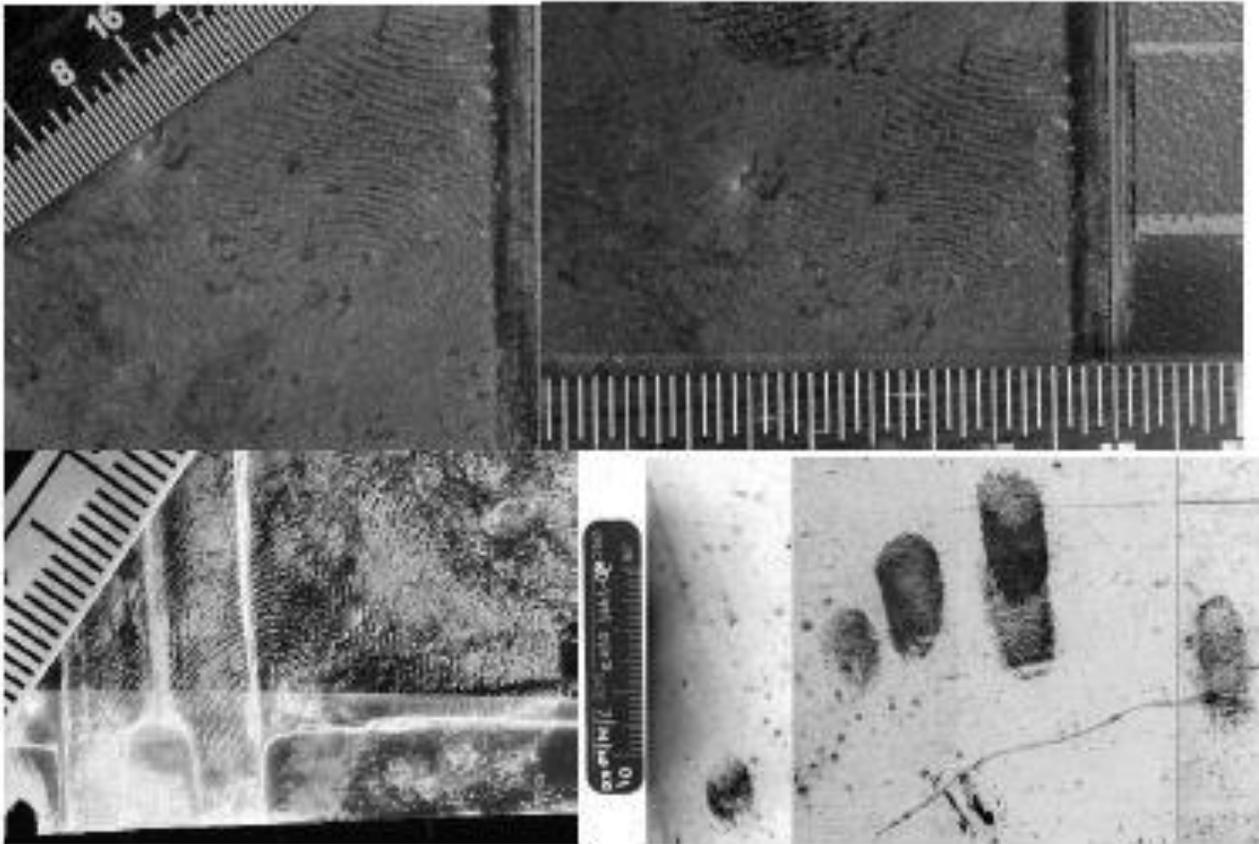


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Increasingly, CDs of photos are submitted with evidence for subsequent processing (this multiplies the work required of lab examiners). Also, the lab is seeing more paper evidence submitted that has been powdered (this limits the lab's ability to develop additional latent prints and subjects any ridge detail developed by powder to be damaged in transport). Finally, although more photos are being submitted with scales which is required for AFIS searches and is great, examiners need to be able to see the units of the scales for them to be useful.



Pictured left: Four examples of photos of latent prints submitted to the lab. The example at the bottom right is the only one acceptable for use with AFIS. Don't worry about trying to get too close when photographing. Latent Print Examiners can enlarge photos after they have made the 1:1 sizing adjustment using the scale.



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Gun Evidence and DNA swabs

The laboratory is also seeing an increase in the submission of guns associated with U UW investigations. Please refer to the recommendations at

http://nircl.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/GunHandlerDNASwabChartNIRCL.29544131.pdf. The lab made this request of agencies to help the Firearms section meet ATF mandated turn-around times. The laboratory is happy to assist with swabbing guns submitted for person-crime investigations but is asking for assistance with less serious crimes.

Drug destruction is scheduled for Wednesday August 26th – Last summer, we were given new restrictions on the submission of drug evidence for destruction. Because of the requirement to palletize the boxes of drugs and in order to maximize the capacity of the delivery truck, there will be strict packaging guidelines beginning this year. The maximum capacity for our truck is 288 boxes.

- Please submit all drug evidence in sealed **cardboard boxes** labeled with the agency name and a box number with the total number of boxes submitted (e.g., Kildeer PD 1/4, Kildeer PD 2/4...).
- Plastic bins or other large containers (duffle bags, suitcases, etc.) **cannot** be accommodated.
- The boxes loaded onto the truck will be 14”W x 24”L x 12”H so please break down plant material and large packages of evidence to facilitate repackaging by lab staff.
- One new restriction is that compressed powders (e.g., cocaine, heroin, fentanyl) cannot be delivered to the destruction facility as bricks. The laboratory will have to break these down prior to transport. **Before August 15th, please inform the lab of the number of bricks of compressed powders your agency will be submitting.** Please box these separately with the additional labeling of “bricks”.
- Solvents from drug manufacturing cases are limited to sealed 5-gallon pails or smaller. If you have smaller containers of these liquids, it would be helpful and safer for agencies to package the smaller containers within a sealed 5-gallon pail.

Several agencies have offered to package the drugs directly into boxes provided by the lab. If your agency can assist in this way, **THANK YOU!** Please let the lab know how many boxes will be needed.

- If your agency is packing drugs into lab provided boxes, please ensure boxes are packed **tightly** so that the box lid flaps are in direct contact with the contents. Partially filled boxes get crushed and then weaken the structural stability of the loaded and stacked pallets which is not safe.
- Please use the labeling convention described above.
- Please keep the weight of the boxes to about 40 lbs or less, but don’t worry about making the boxes the same weight, heavy ones will be put on the bottom and lighter ones on top.
- If there are not enough drugs to fill the last box, just add the word “partial” to the box labeling and that evidence will be repackaged by the lab.
- *Pro Packaging tip*, larger glass paraphernalia can be gently broken with a hammer to save space. Try to keep broken glass in the center of the box surrounded by other evidence.



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Drug Destruction Inventory forms can be found at http://nircl.org/home/lab_forms.

Gun destruction is scheduled for Thursday September 17th - Gun and Weapon Destruction Inventory forms can also be found at http://nircl.org/home/lab_forms.

Pictured right: Guns being transferred for destruction in 2019 using a magnetized plate.



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!