



The NIRCL Update

Spring 2020

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory



Above: **Karen Duquette** gives an overview of the Latent Print Section at one of the **Quarterly Presentations** at the Mundelein Police Department. Right: Footwear impression cast made at a recent training at the Lake Zurich Police Department.



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Director's Message:

Thank you to the **Executive Board** and **Trustees** who approved the laboratory budget for FY21 on April 3rd by video conference. There were a couple of minor hiccups, but the meeting went very well overall. Unless, there are significant changes in our social restrictions soon, I plan on providing a written report to all agencies covering the laboratory operations for the year in lieu of our **Annual Meeting**. We will continue to consider meeting later in the year as social restrictions allow.



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Please find information about laboratory operations in response to coronavirus restrictions throughout this report and at http://nircl.org/covid-19_operational_updates. Briefly, the laboratory halted operations from March 23rd – April 7th, but has begun to safely allow very limited access to the lab by staff and agencies. The laboratory is currently functioning with a very skeleton staff to allow for necessary evidence intake and to not get too far behind on casework. As conditions and restrictions change state-wide, the lab will keep you updated on operational changes.

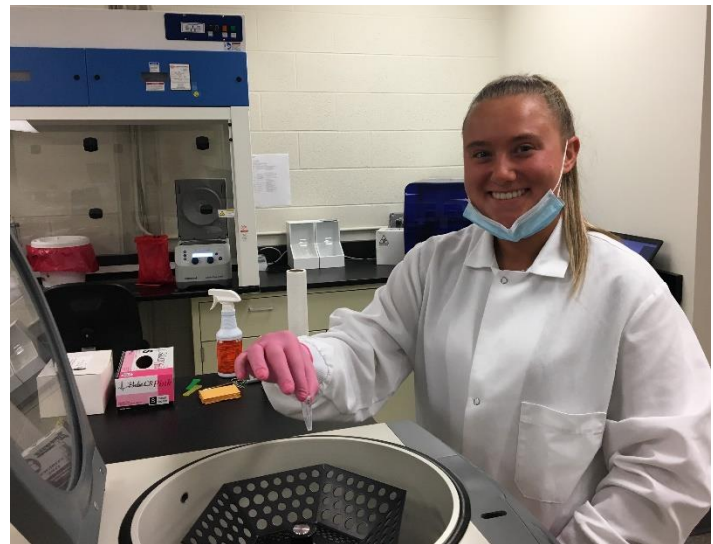
The laboratory welcomes **Superintendent Donald Stephens III** and the **Rosemont Department of Public Safety** as well as **Chief Michael Saunders** and the **Evergreen Park Police Department** into the laboratory membership. With the addition of these agencies, the lab now serves over **1.6 million** citizens!

Thank you for your support of the laboratory.

Philip T. Kinsey, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Staffing Update:

With the approval of the FY21 Budget, we are pleased to announce the hiring of **Franni Tempesta** (*pictured right*) into the Firearms section! Franni interned with the laboratory last summer and made an excellent impression with everyone. Her internship was highlighted in the Summer 2019 Quarterly Report. Franni will be graduating from the University of Wisconsin, Platteville in May and will join the laboratory on June 1st. She will make a great addition to the lab and we look forward to working with her!



Laboratory staff are being exceedingly considerate about adjusting their schedules to maximize safety and social distancing. As with so many aspects of our work and lives now, *until conditions and restrictions change*, we have two scientists in different sections of the lab at a time and two shifts per day, 7 days a week. They are to be commended for their efforts to keep the work moving for our agencies.



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Casework Trends:

In this report, data for the 2019 4th quarter and 2020 1st quarter are tabulated below. Backlogs and turn-around times (TATs) continue to meet the high expectations of our agencies. As schools began closing in early March, our DNA scientist/parents needed to spend more time away from work. This has led to an increase in the DNA section backlog and TATs, but these metrics are still outstanding. They only pale when compared to their own earlier measures!

	Requests Received		Requests Completed		Final Backlog		Average TATs (days)	
	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2019 Q4	2020 Q1
Chemistry	528	580	519	569	52	41	7	8
DNA	224	254	279	292	75	103	36	43
Latent Prints	306	279	312	326	71	24	21	18
Firearms	192	186	213	217	66	35	38	13
Toxicology	138	96	127	93	24	16	12	9

Kudos to the NIRCL scientists for staying so productive! We are not anticipating a tsunami of evidence to be submitted as social restrictions ease, but we may have some catching up to do in the short term. That said, there are no long-term concerns about backlogs and turn-around times.

Training Corner:

Overview of the Lab

The laboratory has received good feedback from the attendees at the quarterly **Overview of the Lab** presentations (pictured on page 1). Again, given social gathering restrictions, these in-person presentations are **temporarily on hiatus**. However, the PowerPoint slide presentations for these overviews have been made available at http://nircl.org/home/training_corner. Please view or download and contact the lab if you have any questions or need clarification on any of the materials. As we all become more familiar with distance learning and video conferencing, we will schedule the presentations as soon as practicable.

Detection, Collection and Preservation of Footwear and Tire Track Evidence

Gary Lind and **Tony Spadafora** conducted a one-day, hands-on training on footwear and tire track evidence at the **Lake Zurich Police Department**. Students were able take advantage of the last traces of snow to practice their casting





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of footwear (*pictured right and on page 1*). Gary and Tony look forward to offering this class again next winter, maybe a little earlier for better snow conditions!

Continue to look at the website for upcoming training opportunities



Laboratory Communication:

Thank you for continuing to use the clerical@nircl.org email address when requesting information for non-urgent matters. In your request 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.

Access to laboratory reports with Microsoft SharePoint – Recently the lab has been assisting agencies that have not been able to access their electronic laboratory reports. This stemmed from agencies that had changed email providers and didn't notify the lab so the appropriate updates could be made to our side of the system. If your agency will be changing email providers, please contact Mark Milford ((847) 362-0676 x103 or mmilford@nircl.org) at the lab before the change happens to ensure seamless access to your reports. Thank you.

Impactful Evidence:

Hemp/CBD Field Screening Kits available through Sirchie – These presumptive test kits are available for assessing THC levels in the field. Go to <https://www.sirchie.com/nark-ii-hemp-cbd-screening-test.html#XpdABchKiUk> for more information.

Drug destruction changes coming – Last summer, we were given new restrictions on how to submit drug evidence for destruction. New manifests detailing the hazardous chemicals included in the shipment are now required as are strict packaging guidelines. These new restrictions will require some changes as the laboratory accepts drug evidence for destruction. The main impact to be felt by our agencies is that laboratory staff will have to repackage all drugs as they come into our facility for us to meet the packaging requirements for disposal. Given the current uncertainty regarding interstate travel, we are looking to postpone this effort until late summer. Instructions for how to submit drugs to the lab for destruction will be forthcoming.



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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!