



# The NIRCL Update

## Winter 2020

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory

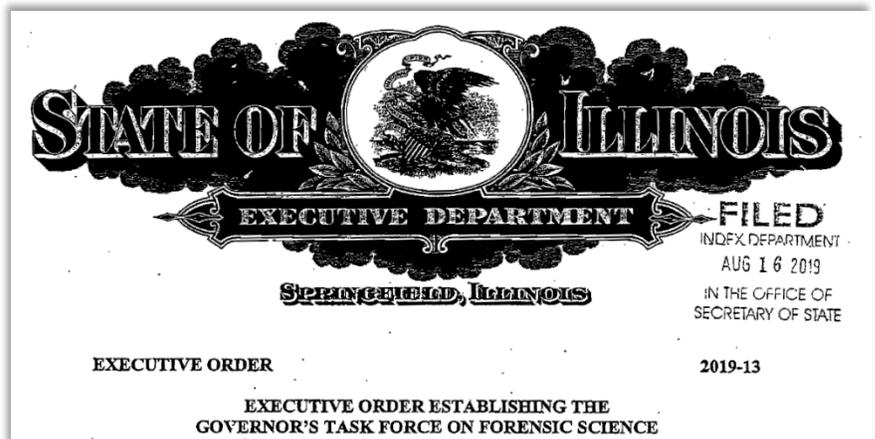
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### Director's Message:

The next Laboratory **Board of Directors Meeting** (Executive Board and Trustees) is scheduled for **March 26, 2020** at **12:00** at the **Vernon Hills Police Department Training Room**.

I was recently asked to represent our laboratory with an appointment to the **Governor's Task Force on Forensic Science**. The group includes a broad range of stakeholders in criminal justice and is charged with making recommendations for improved forensic services in Illinois, to review the structures of forensic commissions from other states and to make recommendations towards the establishment of such a commission in Illinois.



The lab was successful in a competitive grant submission and will receive **\$193,000** dollars this year from Paul Coverdell funds to go towards the purchase of an instrument for THC testing in DUI samples and for improved and expanded drug screening (more information below).

Thank you for your support of the laboratory.

Philip T. Kinsey, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



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### Staffing Update:

One of the great attributes of the NIRCL scientific staff is their versatility. Over a third of our scientists are qualified to perform testing in more than one discipline. This is increasingly rare in forensics and allows a great level of flexibility when facing the challenges of keeping up with casework, quality assurance and bringing on new technology that all crime labs face. This versatility is shown in the outstanding and consistently low backlogs and turn-around times seen at the lab (below).

### Casework Trends:

In this report, data for the third and fourth quarters of 2019 and for years 2018 and 2019 are tabulated below. Fourth quarter productivity numbers are very similar to those from quarter three; which is outstanding because the quarter three numbers were excellent! **Great work again NIRCL Scientists!!**

QUARTER	Requests Received		Requests Completed		<i>Final</i> Backlog		Average TATs (days)	
	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2019 Q3	2019 Q4
Chemistry	620	528	636	519	42	52	5	7
DNA	268	224	300	279	70	75	34	36
Latent Prints	364	306	374	312	77	71	24	21
Firearms	240	192	218	213	86	66	35	38
Toxicology	126	138	130	127	13	24	10	12

Calendar year data shows that submissions are down slightly across all disciplines except Toxicology (below). Using the versatility of the staff, the lab will take advantage of this fact to implement THC testing of DUI samples in house which will involve the purchase and validation of an instrument and technology new to the laboratory. Our goal is to have this testing available in October 2020. Until then, the laboratory will continue its current practice of outsourcing this testing when alcohol levels are below .08g/dL.

YEAR	Requests Received		Requests Completed		<i>Average</i> Backlog		Average TATs (days)	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
Chemistry	2,627	2,274	2,591	2,317	78	36	10	6
DNA	1,083	942	1,198	1,181	175	101	48	37
Latent Prints	1,514	1,310	1,468	1,496	219	95	53	36
Firearms	1,017	908	1,007	970	129	63	49	37
Toxicology	538	539	534	535	20	18	13	11



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### Training Corner:

#### **Overview of the Lab**

The laboratory continues its quarterly **Overview of the Lab** presentations on **February 14, 2020 at 9:00 am**. The venue has changed, and we'll be holding this and future presentations at the **Mundelein Police Department (Thanks Chief Gunther!)**. Twenty- to thirty-minute presentations from each major section of the laboratory will be provided.

The entire overview and discussions should take 2 to 3 hours. Please contact the laboratory ([clerical@nircl.org](mailto:clerical@nircl.org)) to reserve a space at this or an upcoming presentation. Seating may be limited.

#### **Detection, Collection and Preservation of Footwear and Tire track Evidence**

The laboratory will be providing a **one-day** training on footwear and tire track evidence on **March 4<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:00** at the **Lake Zurich Police Department (Thanks Chief Husak!)**. The class size will be limited to 16 students and please no more than 2 students from any one agency. Please contact the laboratory ([clerical@nircl.org](mailto:clerical@nircl.org)) to reserve a space at this training.

Please also find information about these training opportunities at [http://nircl.org/home/training\\_corner](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](mailto:clerical@nircl.org) and we will be happy to send you one.***

**Thank you** for continuing to use the [clerical@nircl.org](mailto: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.

### Impactful Evidence:

**Gun Safety** – In several instances recently, loaded guns have been unknowingly submitted to the laboratory. These instances all involved guns with tubular magazines. Our firearm section has provided the following instructions for clearing a gun with a tubular magazine. *If you are not comfortable clearing a firearm, find someone who is.*

- Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction with fingers away from the trigger.
- Open the chamber by manipulating the bolt or action.
- Check to make sure the chamber is empty by visual and digital (use your fingers) inspection.
- If removable, loosen the tube plunger and remove the follower mechanism.



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- Invert the gun towards the floor and tap the magazine to allow loose cartridges to fall out.
- Work the bolt or action a few times to clear any cartridges stuck in the receiver.
- Reassemble the firearm and with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and fingers away from the trigger and work the bolt or action a few more times to ensure the firearm is clear of ammunition.

*Again, if you are not comfortable clearing a firearm, find someone who is.*

If you need assistance from the lab, please don't hesitate to contact the firearms section at (847) 362-0676 x153 or [firearms@nircl.org](mailto:firearms@nircl.org).

***Thank you for your attention to this critical safety concern!***

**Evidence descriptions** – We have been encountering more and more instances of inconsistencies between the evidence submitted and the descriptions entered on evidence submission forms. This is frequently encountered as incorrect descriptions of packaging, incorrect descriptions of the types of items submitted or miscounts of ammunition submitted with a firearm. Miscounts of ammunition have been encountered most frequently with ammunition left in firearm magazines. Correcting and documenting these errors as required by laboratory accreditation standards takes valuable time away from evidence processing.

**Please ensure all packaging, item types and evidence descriptions are accurate. If a specific analysis of ammunition is not needed (e.g., latent print examination), there is no need to submit it.**

**Special Thanks:** A special thank you is due to **Karen Duquette** of our Latent Prints section who continues to be a good ambassador for our laboratory members by providing yet another laboratory presentation recently; this time for Vernon Hills PD. ***Great Job Karen!***

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

***Stay safe and thanks for reading!***