A crime scene investigator (CSI) was assigned to process a vehicle at the Vehicle Examination Building (VEB). The CSI’s scene notes indicated there were several blue latex/nitrile gloves that appeared to be used in the floorboards of the vehicle. The CSI photographed but did not collect them. The vehicle was released back to the Houston Police Department so the gloves and any potential evidence on them is not recoverable.

The offense in this case was armed robbery and the HPD officer’s e-mailed processing request stated that he wanted the vehicle processed for possible latent prints and DNA. The CSI involved in this nonconformance did not read the Houston Police Department Records Management System (RMS) reports associated with this case prior to processing the vehicle as it is not her practice to do so. The RMS reports are written by HPD officers and frequently provide additional information about vehicles and how they are relevant in an investigation. This information can potentially assist the CSI in determining what crime scene processing needs to be completed, including what items may be of evidentiary value. In this case, the vehicle was stolen at gunpoint. When HPD officers arrested two suspects, one of the suspects had blue latex gloves in his pocket. This information was stated in the RMS report which was available for review by the CSI three days prior to the processing of the vehicle.
Summary of Root Cause Analysis:
Note: Incidents are documented for tracking purposes and trend analysis. Root Cause Analysis is not required for incidents.

There were two contributing factors that led to this nonconformance. The first factor is that reviewing the RMS reports was not part of the CSU training program. The training program that the CSI involved in this nonconformance received did not include reading RMS reports while processing vehicles at the VEB. While CSU management may have viewed reading the RMS reports prior to processing a vehicle as a best practice, this best practice had not been effectively communicated to all CSIs during the training program nor was instruction given on how to access RMS reports. The CSIs interviewed as part of this nonconformance stated that while they may have incorporated the RMS reports into their vehicle processing procedure, it was only because another CSI at the VEB at the same time as them told them of the practice. The second contributing factor is a disconnect between the Crime Scene Unit management’s expectation of staff and what the CSU SOP requires of staff. In addition to the training program not including instruction on how and when to access the RMS reports, the CSU SOP did not instruct CSIs to read RMS reports prior to vehicle processing.

Actions Taken:
While not collecting the gloves from the vehicle was not a direct violation of the CSU SOP, CSU management recognizes that it should have been. The CSU SOP was revised on September 1, 2019, and now encourages CSIs to review RMS reports for scenes involving the Vehicle Examination Building (VEB) since the information in these reports may be beneficial in determining which processes and/or items in or on a vehicle may be relevant to a case. The CSU Field Training Manual revision on May 22, 2019 also includes a section on utilizing RMS reports. CSU acknowledges that requiring CSIs to review RMS reports may introduce an element of bias into the vehicle processing procedure, however HFSC is willing to assume this risk since valuable information may be contained within the reports.

Section Manager: Domingo Villarreal  
Date: 11/18/19

Division Director: Jerry Pena  
Date: 11/18/19

Incidents or Corrective Actions that involve the Biology/DNA section are reviewed by the Technical Leader and CODIS Administrator.

Technical Leader: N/A  
Date: N/A

CODIS Administrator: N/A  
Date: N/A

Quality Director: Erika Ziemak  
Date Closed: 11/22/19