Quality Division Use Only

Quality Tracking #: 2019-091 Classification: Incident
Non-Conformance Level: N/A Section: Firearms
Date of Discovery: 12/10/19 Date of Incident: 12/10/19

Forensic Case Number(s), if applicable: 2019-19625
159360119
165407119

Agency Case Number(s), if applicable:

Description of Non-conformance:
Two cases involving handguns without magazines were handled for NIBIN processing without first being processed for latent prints. At the time of this incident there were no requests from the stakeholder to process either firearm for latent prints. In addition, both 2019-19625 and 2019-20218 have an unfired cartridge that has not been handled and could be processed for latent prints.

Additional Information/Follow-Up:
Houston Forensic Science Center’s (HFSC) Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Development Group conducted an improvement project focused on deficiencies within the multidisciplinary request (MDR) process. As part of this project, the HFSC Firearms Magazine Preservation Policy was implemented on August 15, 2019. This policy serves to proactively preserve possible evidence deposited on firearms prior to NIBIN processing. Per the policy, firearms submitted for NIBIN processing without magazines will first be processed by the latent print section to proactively preserve possible evidence for future analysis. As part of the LSS MDR project, a daily check for MDRs was also implemented. The daily check is conducted by the Firearms section supervisor or manager who check a staging report for firearms submitted without magazines. If one is identified, this information is communicated to the NIBIN technicians so they can ensure the firearm is sent for latent print processing. The first firearm (item 001 from case 2019-19625) was submitted to the laboratory on Thursday December 5, 2019. The second firearm (item 001 from case 2019-20218) was submitted to the laboratory on December 17, 2019. The fact that these firearms did not have magazines was overlooked by both the management review of the staging report and by the NIBIN technicians, who are also responsible for reviewing requests in both JusticeTrax (JT) LIMS and in the portal. Both cases had a second piece of evidence in the box with the firearm. When interviewed, both NIBIN technicians stated that when they saw the second item they assumed it was the magazine, and therefore proceeded with NIBIN processing.
Actions Taken:
When the first instance occurred (2019-19625) the NIBIN technician notified her manager as soon as the issue was noted. The manager then notified the Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Development Group project engineer, the head latent print processor, and the latent print processor supervisor to seek guidance. The LSS project engineer suggested that a latent print processor evaluate the firearm to see if it would have been suitable for processing. After evaluation, the latent print processor determined that while the slide was suitable for latent print processing, the type of material the slide is made of would likely result in a low possibility of yielding friction ridge detail. A latent print processor also examined the firearm from the second instance (2019-20218) and concluded that the firearm did have some surfaces that were suitable for latent print processing. The firearms manager, the NIBIN technicians and a quality specialist met to discuss this nonconformance. Both technicians recognized the need to confirm whether or not additional evidence submitted with a firearm is a magazine prior to commencing with NIBIN processing. Because the firearms had already been handled by the NIBIN technicians and there were no latent print requests from the stakeholder, it was decided that the technicians should proceed with NIBIN processing. HFSC Firearms Magazine Preservation Policy will be evaluated in February 2020 to determine the value of this testing. Data as of December 4, 2019 indicates that approximately 85% of firearms without magazines processed for latent prints did not yield possible suitable latent prints.

Summary of Root Cause Analysis:
Note: Incidents are documented for tracking purposes and trend analysis. Root Cause Analysis is not required for incidents.

N/A

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

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Section Manager</td>
<td>Donna Eudaley</td>
<td>01/08/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Division Director</td>
<td>Amy Castillo</td>
<td>01/09/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Leader</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>CODIS Administrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Director</td>
<td>Erika Ziemak</td>
<td>01/13/20</td>
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