



Quality Division Use Only

Quality Tracking #:	2020-064	Classification:	Corrective Action
Non-Conformance Level:	Class II	Section:	Crime Scene
Date of Discovery:	04/23/20	Date of Incident:	04/12/20

Forensic Case Number(s), if applicable:	Agency Case Number(s), if applicable:
2020-05044	048125420

Description of Non-conformance:
Crime scene investigators (CSIs) did not conduct a complete search for friction ridge detail while processing a scene with leuco-crystal violet (LCV), and therefore did not capture comparison quality photographs of friction ridge impressions while processing a scene on April 12, 2020. HFSC recognizes that because comparison quality photographs were not captured at the scene, no further evaluation of the friction ridge details can be performed.

Additional Information/Follow-Up:
While reviewing crime scene photographs as part of the technical review of this case, a Crime Scene Unit (CSU) supervisor observed friction ridge detail in possible blood (a patent print) and with LCV application. The scene was an interior residence with areas of possible blood on the walls and on a nightstand. Four CSIs responded to the scene; two CSIs initially responded to the scene and two additional CSIs arrived later to relieve the initial CSIs due to a shift change.

The CSU supervisor noted that the CSIs did not capture comparative quality photographs of possible bloodstains. Comparison quality photographs, in addition being RAW images, are also required to include a scale of measurement. These images are used by latent print examiners to determine the suitability of the ridge detail for possible identification and comparison purposes.

One image shows a nightstand which the CSIs processed with LCV. However, LCV was only applied to the top and front of the nightstand. Possible bloody palm prints on the side of the nightstand were not observed by the CSIs and therefore were not processed with LCV.

Another image shows an area on a wall where LCV was applied to a possible bloodstain. Subtle possible friction ridge detail can be observed in the image. However, the CSI did not observe the possible friction ridge detail when she evaluated the area while on scene and therefore did not take comparison quality photographs.



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 three contributing factors that influenced the root cause of this nonconformance: the subjective nature of friction ridge interpretation, communication issues, and personnel-related factors.

After the application of LCV, the CSI examined the areas that reacted but did not feel that there was any friction ridge detail of value. The CSI made this decision based on her training and experience. CSU management believes that the CSIs should have erred on the side of caution and taken comparison quality photographs since the CSIs are not trained latent print examiners. However, management agrees that the CSU SOP allows for and acknowledges the risk of CSIs using their own judgement regarding the value of friction ridge evidence when processing scenes.

Communication issues also played a role in this nonconformance. When the second CSU squad arrived on scene to relieve the first squad, they believed that the first squad had completed a thorough search for possible bloodstains to be processed with LCV. They did not conduct their own search for possible bloodstains.

This nonconformance was determined to have personnel-related concerns and further action is also being addressed through the Human Resources Division and CSU management to address this issue.

Actions Taken:

A CSU supervisor discussed his concerns with the technical processing of the scene with each CSI involved in this nonconformance. An email was also sent to all CSIs reminding them of the importance of evaluating surfaces that may have been touched or handled for friction ridge detail. The email also reminded them to perform thorough searches, and, when evaluating possible friction ridge, to err on the side of caution and take comparison quality photographs.

CSU management recognized the need for improving communication between squads when one squad is sent to relieve another. The SOP was revised on 07/01/2020 to include clearer instruction regarding communication between squads, as well an improved description of the responsibilities of the lead and assist roles take while processing crime scenes.



Houston Forensic Science Center
Incident/Corrective Action Report
Quality Division

Section Manager: Domingo Villarreal _____

Date: 12/16/20 _____

Division Director: Carina Haynes _____

Date: 12/17/20 _____

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: 01/20/21 _____