



**Quality Division Use Only**

Quality Tracking #:	2020-092	Classification:	Incident
Non-Conformance Level:	N/A	Section:	Latent Print Section
Date of Discovery:	10/19/20	Date of Incident:	09/18/20

Forensic Case Number(s), if applicable:	Agency Case Number(s), if applicable:
2020-12012	116785220

**Description of Non-conformance:**

An item was processed for latent prints, but the stakeholder also requested the same item to be swabbed for DNA.

**Additional Information/Follow-Up:**

The communication between the requestor and the biology analyst, a member of the biology triage team, began on 9/1/2020 regarding a different case, 2020-11546. On 9/4/2020, the requestor told the biology analyst within that same email thread that the suspect was involved in two other similar crimes. The requestor submitted a cell phone collected from one of the other cases, 2020-12012, and requested latent print processing on the item on 9/4/2020 after a recommendation from the biology analyst based on the substrate of the item. Email communication between the requestor and the biology analyst on 9/17/2020 showed that the requestor stated he changed his mind and wanted the phone swabbed for DNA instead of latent print processing. The biology analyst asked the requestor to submit a request for biology on this item via the portal. The biology analyst forwarded this email thread to the latent print supervisors and told them the requestor no longer wanted latent processing performed on the phone, however the subject line of the email was still the original case, 2020-11546. When the latent print supervisors looked into the case and saw that no processing request was in this case, the email was disregarded and subsequently the email correspondence was not uploaded into the case record in JusticeTrax. On 9/18/2020 the assigned latent print processor contacted the requestor with a question about the cell phone in case 2020-12012 that was about to be processed, unaware of the previous email communication between the requestor, the biology analyst and the latent print supervisors. The requestor responded to the processor's question on 9/20/2020, with no indication that he no longer wanted the phone processed for latent prints. Thus, the processor proceeded with analysis. On 10/14/2020, the biology analyst contacted the requestor to notify him



that a biology request on the phone had not yet been submitted via the portal. On 10/19/2020 the requestor responded and stated he had just submitted the request that morning. The biology analyst emailed the latent print processors and asked if they had already processed the phone. They responded yes and that they were unaware that the requestor instead wanted it swabbed for DNA. The biology analyst contacted the requestor to notify him that biology would no longer be possible on the phone since it had been processed for latent prints. On 11/9/2020 a meeting was held with all involved parties including a quality specialist and the latent print manager to discuss this incident. All involved parties acknowledged that the communication within this case was lacking and discussed ways to improve, should this scenario happen again. The biology analyst agreed to include all case numbers in the subject line of the email if there are multiple cases being discussed. She also agreed to include a summary of the email threads when she forwards the emails to latent prints if the emails are regarding a multidisciplinary request. In addition to this, latent print section management agreed to follow up with the biology section if they receive an email about a case that does not appear to correspond to a latent print request. The biology analyst disseminated this information to the other members of the biology triage team. The involved staff members acknowledged that communication regarding multidisciplinary requests is normally very good. However, in this instance, since there were multiple cases being discussed without clear indication of which case the phone belonged to, this confusion led to miscommunication.

**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

**Actions Taken:**

During the meeting with all involved parties it was discovered that the biology section does not have access to the communication log in JusticeTrax LIMS. As of 11/17/2020 the biology section has the ability to view communications within cases in JusticeTrax should they contain any multidisciplinary requests. Prior to this, the section was limited to only the communication in Porter Lee LIMS, which the other six sections at HFSC no longer utilize for their cases. On 11/10/2020, the lead latent print processor contacted the requestor via phone to ask him if this incident had a negative impact on his investigation to which the requestor responded that it did not and that he was mostly interested in the digital forensics results on the phone. The digital forensics request was submitted by the stakeholder on 9/17/2020. While all analysis was done in accordance with the portal request system in this case, HFSC acknowledges the miscommunication that occurred in this case and that the biology request that was communicated via email was not fulfilled.



**Houston Forensic Science Center**  
**Incident/Corrective Action Report**  
Quality Division

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**Section Manager:** Rebecca Green

**Date:** 12/07/20

**Division Director:** Amy Castillo

**Date:** 12/09/20

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

**Technical Leader:** Jeniffer Molina

**Date:** 12/04/2020

**CODIS Administrator:** N/A

**Date:** N/A

**Quality Director:** Erika Ziemak

**Date Closed:** 12/29/20