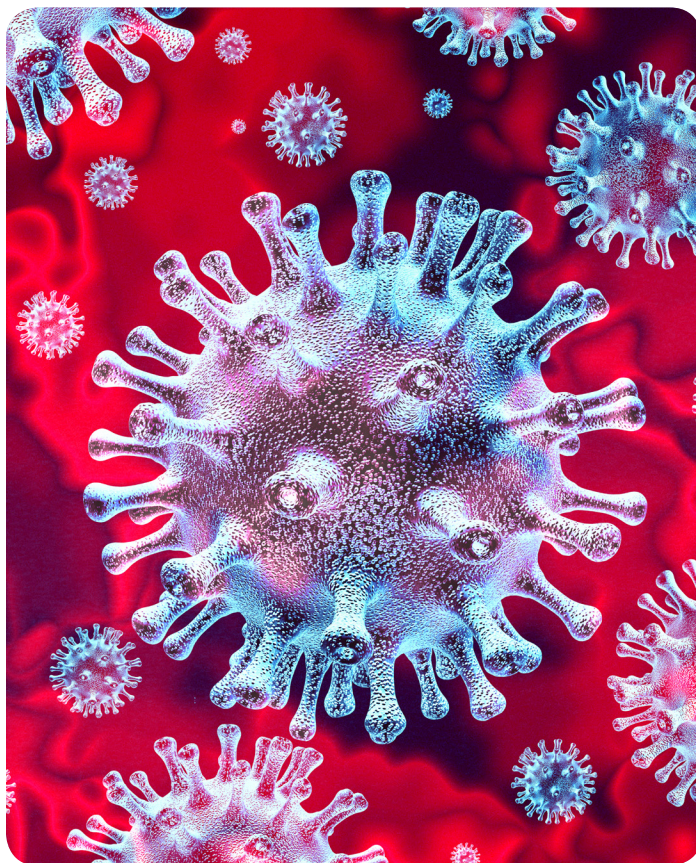


TODAY@HFSC

MARCH 18, 2020



COVID-19 AND HFSC

HFSC will rotate schedules beginning March 23

The Houston Forensic Science Center will begin operating on a rotating schedule on Monday March 23, 2020 in response to the current coronavirus threat. This does not include the crime scene unit, which will continue

normal 24/7 operations at this time. Some components of the organization are already working from home.

The goal is to minimize in-person interactions while also continuing to provide stakeholders with crime laboratory services.

We have stopped all tours and visits to the laboratory that are not part of operational needs. If you are picking up documents, please be aware there will be extra precautions to maintain distancing.

The rotating schedule will reduce staff size in the office by about 50 percent, but it will also decrease production. Turnaround times and backlogs will grow as a result of these measures, however, operations will continue for as long as we are able. This rotating schedule will remain in effect until federal, state and municipal leaders remove the limitations on social gatherings.

If Houston takes more restrictive measures, HFSC will work with the Houston Police Department and other stakeholders to prioritize what work becomes essential and what work can stop. At this point, it is difficult to predict what will happen, but we may find ourselves in a position that only the most serious and urgent crimes that threaten physical safety are processed.

Stakeholders that have an urgent or rush case should call 713-929-6760.

The following sections will begin operating on a rotating schedule Monday March 23, 2020:

- Seized drugs
- Multimedia
- Forensic biology/DNA
- Latent prints
- Client services/case management

The following sections are expected to move to a similar schedule by early April:

- Firearms
- Toxicology

Most staff will be able to work from home when they are not physically on-site. Staff unable to perform work from home will work longer days when they are on-site.

We understand these measures will impact all stakeholders and the justice system, however, HFSC has an obligation to the safety and security of its staff as well as to the community.

We too must ensure we abide by the social distancing measures that are in place to help combat the coronavirus.