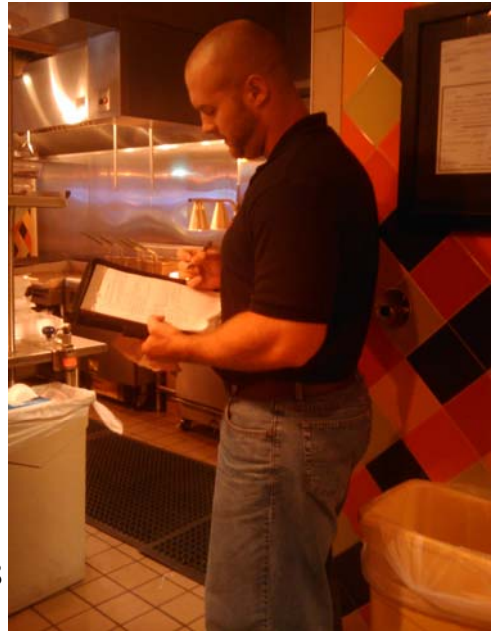


ENS Paul Eaton
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2009
East Central University
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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

My name is Paul Eaton. Currently I am enrolled at East Central University pursuing an Environmental Health Science Degree. One requisite required for an EHS degree is to complete an internship of our choice. The EHS program at East Central has a superior track record of placing students into the United States Public Health Service. This summer of 2009, I received a temporary Commission into the United States Public Health Service as an Ensign, assigned to Indian Health Services Oklahoma City Area Office.

To become accepted into the Commission Core JRCOSTEP program required many months of preparation. I submitted my application in September of 2008. The information required is the same as someone who is applying for a permanent Commission. Four letters of reference were required as well as a background check conducted by the Core. This process took 8 months to complete for me. Orders were emailed to me, stating a start date of 01JUN09 through 07AUG09.



Upon arrival at the Indian Health Service Area Office in Oklahoma City, I met my preceptor, Captain Richard Turner. He then introduced me to Commander Danny Walters, whom he said I would spend most my time with in the field. Both officers were very hospitable and professional. They explained they did not have a set plan or specific project for me to complete, rather I would shadow them in normal operations.

Duties in the office tasked were broad. I assisted CAPT. Turner with his collateral duty as security officer. I helped enroll individuals into the HSPD-12 system, ensured paper work was proper before filling, and made id badges for individuals. Another task completed was drafting a standard operating procedure for shadow box preparations on outgoing service members. Creating protocol comes natural to me and was enlisted to help create a communicable disease disaster S.O.P. for the Anadarko Health clinic. Experience with the information system I.H.S. uses to catalog surveys called "WEBRS" was gained through data input and monitoring of when surveys were due. The annual Area awards were held during my stint, which I assisted in organizing and implementing.



Most of my experience in the field consisted of institutional environmental health, because both immediate supervisors are billeted industrial hygienist. The first several field trips were spent at dental units, in cities like El Reno or Anadarko, going over sterilization practices and safe handling

procedures. The object was to ensure employees were properly disinfecting and storing equipment, while minimizing potential puncture incidents. The bulk of CDR Walters work is dental x-ray surveys. I observed the procedures used to measure the x-ray heads to confirm they were operating within the permissible limits to ensure minimum exposure to the patients. I assisted CAPT. Turner perform a medical x-ray survey at the Lawton hospital. This was more in depth then the dental survey, which



only required a few measurements compared to a medical x-ray survey. CDR Walters is currently drafting a nitrous oxide testing standard operating procedure for the entire Indian Health Service. I was able to go out on N₂O surveys where we identified leaks with units nitrous apparatus and took corrective action on the spot. After several field assignments, I came to understand a large part of field work entails educating the employees on your goals to ensure a safe working environment for there benefit and the individuals they serve.

Lt. Charity Webb, a graduate of East Central EHS program, mentored my progress performing food surveys according to FDA standards. We serviced gaming centers like Lucky Star and Otoe. I truly learned the value of proper procedures for

food handling with respect to “farm to fork”. Observations included holding temps, cooking temps, required mandated cleaning of certain equipment, dry and cold storage compartments, and expiration dates to mention a few.

Surveying the Sac and Fox nations water and waste water system with Faral Smith, proved to be very educational. Starting with surveying the Water Stand that creates the pressure for the system, we



moved to inspecting all the well heads for compliance and the chlorination station was holding Chlorine at the proper ppm. The waste water system consisted of two gravity fed lagoon systems. We viewed the lift system for the waste water and went through a stringent inspection of the lagoons themselves.

My experience with these two organizations and their personnel was positive, productive and educational. The information I had previously only read about and tested over in the class room, was brought out to a tangible application. The leadership and quality of work I observed and helped perform, meets my standard of excellence, which only reinforces the career path I am pursuing. I would encourage anyone pursuing a career in the environmental health field to look at the intern with the U.S. Public Healths COSTEP program, specifically with Indian Health Service.