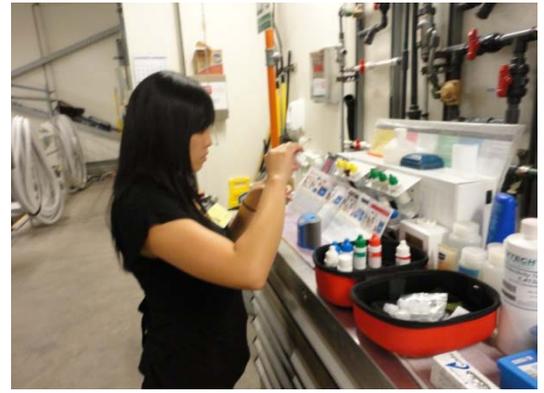


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**Jr COSTEP Summer 2011**  
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Hi, my name is Maika Lee. This coming 2011-2012 year I will be a senior at Western Carolina University studying Environmental Health. This summer, I was privileged to have the opportunity to intern for United States Public Health Services with the Indian Health Services. I was stationed at Phoenix Indian Medical Center with my preceptor Leonard Lopez, Chief of Environmental Health and Safety, Greg Heck, Safety Officer, and Terry Nelson, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.



This summer I got to be involved a variety of activities that made me see how much I did not know and still needed to learn. One of the main duties that I was in charge of at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center was conducting fire drills in outpatient buildings surrounding the hospital. It was challenging at first because after shadowing my preceptor a few times, I was on my own. I do not have a loud voice and I am not very tall so it made it challenging for older people to take me seriously. Usually, I get asked if I am lost or needed some assistance, but after explaining who I was and what I would be doing, the supervisors would then assist me and ask what they needed to do, so it was fun and interesting to work with people.

Routine hazard surveillance rounds were also done weekly in the different departments of the hospital. Identifying the hazards and risks for injury was a learning experience because as each department is different, the hazard varied as well. I believe that educating the departments is critical when reflecting what hazards were identified because workers may have never learned about them. Additionally, I also checked each department's Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) book to see if they have an inventory sheet and if it is up-to-date. These are important because they provide workers proper procedures for handling and working with a particular substance.

I also learned how to fit-test N95 masks on staff that could potentially come into contact with any blood-borne, body fluid, or any airborne pathogens. This time, I learned how to yell or at least I felt like it. But it was nice to see how many people from each department came by because they understood the importance of not only protecting themselves, but protecting others as well.



Ergonomics was another activity that I was able to do. Honestly, I did not realize how many staff members were suffering from ergonomic complications and evaluating them was interesting because it made me more aware of how I work in my work area.

These complications may lead to worse scenarios that would require further medical assistance which means loss of productivity and man hours. This also correlates to safe patient movement and handling which I was able to be a part of. I learned about the different lifts we have at the hospital and how to use them properly.





I also took part in the emergency decontamination exercise at Phoenix Indian Medical Center. The exercise was based on radiation exposure. As the security controller I was able to see how the security department responded to the exercise. The decontamination group learned how to properly put on Level C PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and experience the work and rest cycles with the temperature outside. Practicing these exercises will provide participants with the opportunity to discuss and examine preparedness and response capabilities in the different areas of communication, responders of safety and health, emergency public safety and response, and HAZMAT decontamination response.

Outside the hospital, I had the opportunity to work with the Western Arizona District Office in participating in some of their field work such as helping out with elderly safety and blood-borne pathogen presentations, food surveys, pool surveys, mobile home park surveys, mosquito trappings, food market surveys, detention center surveys, bingo hall concession surveys, casino life safety surveys, and daycare center surveys.

Working at Phoenix Indian Medical Center definitely taught me so much. It gave me a peek of all the different components of Environmental Health from fire safety, safety hazards, food safety, life safety codes, pharmaceutical waste, hazardous waste, emergency management, etc that textbooks, itself, could have not taught me. Learning from professionals that are passionate and committed to what they do greatly helped me to gain the experience and understand what textbooks tried to teach. Just being able to see their dedication, commitment, and passion for what they do truly inspired me to see how important their jobs are to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the nation.



It takes discipline, flexibility, accountability, and patience to understand that improvement takes one step at a time. In all, this experience was incredible. The friendships that were made will always be with me and the skills developed and learned will not go to waste.