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Jr COSTEP Summer 2012
Western Carolina University
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Hello, my name is Perry Fotopoulos and this upcoming year I will be a Senior at Western Carolina University. I will be receiving a degree in Environmental Health with a concentration in Pre-Medicine. This summer I had the opportunity and privilege for being an intern with the United States Public Health Service. My internship was under the Indian Health Services and stationed in Phoenix, Arizona. I was placed at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center with Leonard Lopez the Chief of Environmental Health and Safety as my preceptor. I also worked closely with Occupational Health & Safety Specialist/Safety Officer, Greg Heck along with Emergency Preparedness Manager Security Supervisor, Terry Nelson.

This summer was filled with numerous tasks and activities that I did not have previous knowledge from classes. This was a great opportunity for me to further my knowledge that I have not had. I was put in charge of several tasks at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center, and they were; conducting fire drills throughout the outpatient departments and all business occupancies on campus; and setting up the new mass emergency notification system that the hospital will implement and conducting training for the new system with the employees.

Fire drills, at first, was a new concept and not as much challenging as was the importance of following chain of commands for setting them up properly. This was difficult at first because I had to get to know the departments and contact information of the department heads, switchboard operators, and fire/police departments. This soon became repetitious when having finished several drills with Safety Officer Greg Heck and became a fun task being able to interact with the different departments.

The mass alert management system also known as the Arizona Health Alert Network (AZHAN) was at first a difficult task but became easier with repetition. Due to computer errors and self-errors made, it helped me become very familiar with the system. I was given the task to update the new system from the hospital's older system AMERILERT. I was put in charge of adding the new users, emergency codes, groups and the training of the administrators that will be using the system. This became very fun because I was able to teach other users and show them shortcuts that I picked up through trial and errors and was able to make the new system easier for them to use.

I was also able to work with Safety Officer Greg Heck in the hospital's routine hazard surveillance rounds. Hazard rounds were done in the various departments of the hospital and were done to identify any hazards that may pose a risk for injury and any other risks that may be out of compliance. I had knowledge of potential risks, but I was amazed on how many different items are checked when surveying a hospital or the different departments. There was not a square inch of a department that went under looked; floors, walls, equipment and ceiling were examined closely; along with the disposing of waste. I did not make the connection of my previous tasks were helping out with the hazard rounds till I



started doing them. One of my first tasks given to me by my preceptor Leonard Lopez was to check every department's MSDS books and make sure that they were up to date. Another task was to update, check functionality and locate all eyewash sinks at the hospital. Performing these tasks was the perfect way for me to become familiar with the hospital and to locate potential hazards.

Another task that was new for me that I had a great time learning was how to fit-test for the N95 masks that staff are required to use throughout their everyday duties at the hospital. The N95 is used throughout the hospital to protect the employees that come in contact with numerous types of airborne pathogens and blood/body fluids. I was able to meet so many of the employees that I would not have the

opportunity of meeting without doing the fit testing. I was given charge of using the Porta-Count machine. Quantitative Fit Testing where the Porta-Count assesses the adequacy of a respirator by measuring leakage into and out of the device. The machine is used when an employee has failed the traditional quantitative fit testing. The test takes about ten minutes with the Porta-Count machine and it assures that the N95 mask is securely fitted to protect the employee.



However, my internship in Phoenix was not all spent working with just the hospital's staff. I had the opportunity to work with the District Office's intern, Angela Brown on a noise survey for the hospital's Power Plant and the new equipment installed to make sure that employee's working in this department had proper PPE and not in immediate danger. I also had the opportunity to work with the Acting Area Director Captain Welch at the San Carolos Reservation to work on the Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever campaign that was held there throughout the summer months by the CDC. I was also able to teach Food Handler's Safety Courses at the hospital as well as Ft. McDowell with LTJG Mistin Ray of the Tempe Office and Commander Sarah Snyder at Havasupai. Havasupai had to be one of the most interesting times of just not my internship but my life. I was able to work with CDR Snyder and my fellow classmate Stephanie Bridges on West Nile Tracking, food surveys and school surveys.



Working at Phoenix Indian Medical Center definitely taught me a great deal of real world knowledge that I was never able to get inside a classroom. It was a different type of knowledge that I will be able to use in my career as well as life. The people I worked with showed me how things truly get done and that in some situations; you have to have thick skin because not everyone will see you as trying to help them. Mr. Lopez, Mr. Heck and Mr. Nelson showed me a great amount of knowledge and the dedication it takes to finish a task and that our work is never done. They taught me that there will always be hazards, employees, patients that may be difficult to deal with, but the experience will show you how to handle it the next time around. Everyone I had the chance of knowing was great and I am proud to have had the opportunity of working beside them. I want to thank everyone that has worked with me and making all this possible.