

**ENS Benjamin Purcell  
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2014  
Eastern Kentucky University  
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Redding, California**

Hello, my name is Benjamin Purcell. This upcoming academic year I will be a senior at Eastern Kentucky University and will be finishing up my bachelor's degree in Environmental Health Science. I heard about the COSTEP opportunity from my professors and peers at EKU, since students from Eastern had previously completed the summer COSTEP with the USPHS. I received nothing but positive feedback when I spoke with my professors and peers, so I jumped at the opportunity to send in my application.



A few months later I was ecstatic to find out that I would be stationed in Redding, California with the Indian Health Service. Even though my main office was in Redding, my time was not limited to just that district. I was fortunate enough to travel around to the surrounding IHS offices such as Sacramento, Escondido and Arcata where I spent a week at a time with different Environmental Health Officers and Sanitary Facility Construction staff, learning what they do and how it relates to the Environmental Health career field. Traveling around California was something I had wanted to accomplish before leaving and I was able to do this through work, it worked out great.

The COSTEP experience was not your average work day, sure there was a fair amount of time spent in the office but most of my experience was spent out in the field observing my preceptor, Charles Craig, and the officers from other visited areas. A great thing about the COSTEP experience is that you, the COSTEP, have a lot of say in what you do at work. If there is something you thoroughly enjoy or want to know about then the officers are always eager to feed that appetite. Not just that, the officers will often ask what YOU want to do.

Some examples of things I would do while in the office are: coding violations found during surveys per the FDA Food Code as well as OSHA, report writing, develop presentations, review HACCP plans and occasionally attend meetings. Most of the out of office work consisted of food and safety surveys of kitchens, casinos, senior nutritional centers, Head Start programs and healthcare clinics. During most of the surveys/inspections I simply observed and learned from my preceptor but as the summer was coming to an end I had the opportunity to work with John Fluette, an Environmental Health Extern in Sacramento, and we



inspected a few restaurants and a Head Start by ourselves with LCDR Sarah Snyder and LT Lisa Nakagawa pointing out anything we may have missed as we went along. I also had the opportunity to attend the Rabies Clinic in Escondido with CAPT Brian Lewelling, this was a very exciting and fun-filled week with the tribes and their pets.

Outside of work I was able to travel as well visiting: San Diego, Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Morrow Bay, San Francisco as well as southern Oregon. Needless to say you have plenty personal time to do what one wishes as I have now seen nearly all of California. That being said, the COSTEP opportunity is something I highly recommend to anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of many aspects of the environmental health field. This summer was phenomenal and the experience and knowledge you will gain as a COSTEP is far beyond expected.