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My name is Josh Greenberg, and I am currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental and Occupational Health with an emphasis in Industrial Hygiene at California State University, Northridge.

I first heard about the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) while serving in the Navy, and was very excited to learn about the JRCOSTEP internship. Over the summer of 2015 I had the opportunity to work in the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's (NIOSH) Emergency Preparedness and Response Office (EPRO) in Atlanta, Georgia. While there, my preceptor, CDR Chad Dowell, did an excellent job involving me in EPRO work activities.

The summer of 2015 was an exciting time to be at NIOSH. There were several active emergency responses occurring, and many fascinating projects in which to get involved with. I was able to learn how the USPHS aided the fight against Ebola in West Africa, assist with a response to an accidental shipment of viable anthrax, and help edit personal protective equipment (PPE) training videos that the FBI will use to train their personnel. Ultimately, I got to experience first-hand the daily life of a PHS officer.

I was able to be a part of NIOSH's response to the Department of Defense accidental shipment of viable anthrax to laboratories across the United States. Such a large scale incident required a well-coordinated response that involved assessing the level of contamination at labs, effective methods of decontamination, and ensuring that the workers responding were provided with proper PPE. Through some research, I was able to locate information about a similar response, and help make recommendations about proper decontamination procedures and the types of PPE that responders should use during decontamination.

Another very interesting project that I was able to get involved in was a NIOSH study on the cardiovascular and carcinogenic risks associated with modern firefighting. I had the opportunity to travel to the University of Illinois where I was able to assist with collecting air samples, surface samples, testing different decontamination techniques for firefighter turnout gear, and even drawing blood samples. This was really great hands on experience and it was invaluable to see how work done by NIOSH helps keep our emergency responders safe.

I was also able to help edit training videos that the FBI will use to train their personnel on the proper use of PPE while conducting interviews with people suspected of having a transmissible disease. FBI personnel will periodically have to conduct interviews with people that have diseases that require either airborne, contact or droplet precautions. Being part of an effort to provide members of the FBI with training to keep them safe was very fulfilling. The training that I was able to assist with could literally save someone's life.

In addition to the projects listed above, there were several more that I helped with during my time at NIOSH. Just to list a few, I helped with the writing of new anthrax sampling methods that will be published in the NIOSH Manual of Analytical Methods (NMAM) and assisted with making PPE recommendations for personnel who were responding to an avian flu outbreak among birds in the Midwest. I also assisted with administrative duties such as tracking deployments of PHS officers who supported the Ebola response, and keeping an on-call list of officers available to deploy up to date.

Spending my summer working at NIOSH was an incredible experience. I was able to see how NIOSH and PHS Officers make a difference on a national level. The work I did at NIOSH was important in ensuring the safety of all workers, something many of us can relate to on a personal level. I would recommend the USPHS to anyone interested in a career in public service, and who wants the opportunity to work on meaningful projects that will improve the health of people around the world.