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Jr COSTEP Summer 2011  
California State University, Northridge  
National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, Maryland**

My name is Maggie Kong and I am currently pursuing my Master of Science degree in Environmental and Occupational Health with an emphasis in Industrial Hygiene.

I first heard about the US Public Health Service and the Jr COSTEP Program from an announcement my professor made in class. I immediately knew that this was a unique opportunity that I could not pass up. I had the pleasure of working at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland with my preceptor LT Matthew Deptola. Prior to my arrival, I was asked what kind of programs or experiences I would like to gain from the Jr COSTEP Program. Honestly, I named everything and anything I knew that had some kind of safety and industrial hygiene aspect. From electrical safety, ergonomics, hearing protection to chemical sampling, I did it all and more!



I worked on two main projects that dealt specifically with NIH's Hearing Conservation Program. I monitored power plant employees as part of the program's policy to re-monitor and justify exposure above 85 dBA. Additionally, I provided hearing consultations to workers where I relayed the importance of preserving one's hearing, using hearing protection, and getting annual audiometric tests. As for my other project, I was responsible for monitoring instantaneous sound levels in mechanical spaces to determine if sound levels exceed the 85 dBA criteria. If so, proper signs and hearing protection would be reported and communicated to the appropriate personnel.

Finally, my last project included the identification of confined spaces. I have never had any experiences with confined spaces, so this was very new and exciting for me. LT Matt Deptola showed me the ropes of what confined spaces are and the criteria necessary to render them permit required. I also had the chance to participate in a six hour confined space refresher training course where I got to experience the steps of how to tie myself onto a harness, how to be lowered, and how to lift workers back up. It was such a great hands-on experience and it gave me a greater appreciation of



workers going into confined spaces. It also gave me an opportunity to get acquainted with the power plant employees that I would eventually work with on the noise monitoring project (an added bonus!).

Those three main projects definitely kept me busy, but LT Matt Deptola was really great in expanding my experiences to other programs. In the two months that I was there, I assisted with respiratory fit testing, chemical sampling (Methylene Chloride), ergonomic evaluations, noise monitoring, electrical safety inspections, and mold inspections. I'm really thankful for having the opportunity to experience so much in so little time. I found it very rewarding to work in a field that continuously strives to improve work conditions that directly impacts workers. I encourage anyone who is interested in applying their education to a real-world job to apply for the Jr COSTEP Program, you won't regret it!