I started my internship with The City of Fort Collins Utilities towards the end of the spring 2017 semester. My first task was to complete online FEMA courses, National Incident Management System (NIMS) 100 & 700, as this is required by all City employees. It’s mandatory because NIMS outlines how a disaster or threat at any level should be handled nationwide throughout each organization and they want all their employees to be prepared should any incident occur. It took me about 2 weeks to finish both course.

My next project was to help coordinate the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event which is held twice a year in the spring and fall. Every home has some form of hazardous waste within its walls; for example bleach, batteries, paint, pesticides, lightbulbs and so much more. We want to keep these items out of the landfill especially since ours is unlined. There is a hazardous waste drop off site at the landfill free of charge for residents but this collection event is an additional program to promote good stewardship. My part in this event was to coordinate the logistics such as volunteer engagement, incentives, set up/tear down, advertisement, and helping out during the event. After the first event I was to develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that would help plan and process future events. Our first event was schedule for the end of May but due to a freak snowstorm it was reschedule for June. This altered our outcome to only 675 residents attending. However, our September collection event hit a new record of 1100 residents dropping off hazardous waste and keeping ~60,000 lbs. out of the landfill. The goal for each collection is to hit 1% of the demographic but in September we had 1.8% which is almost double and a complete success!
During the summer portion of my internship it was my duty to collect sand trap samples and take them to the laboratory for testing. They were looking for if the waste water met the requirements to be sent to the treatment plant otherwise it would need to be disposed of as hazardous waste. I learned how to fill out Chain of Custody (COC) forms and labels for sample bottles. These sand traps were across the City’s Facilities and were mostly used in areas where work vehicles were being washed. The lab (not a city lab) looked for total halogens, ignitability, benzene, arsenic, toluene, and several others then would send the report back to me.

My mentor was adamant about me experiencing different areas of environmental health within utilities which was very fortunate for me. I toured the water treatment facility, wastewater treatment plant, and meadow spring ranch which is where the biosolids collected at the wastewater treatment facility are land applied. During my free time I worked on earning more FEMA certificates I also participated in spill calls, team meetings, gave a safety briefing for the collection event, exchanged battery recycling programs, collected lighting waste, and delivered Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) handbills. My final independent project was to create a reference manual for the next intern. I met a numerous amount of great people while working for the city. They were dedicated and hardworking who cared about immensely about their work because they love the City of Fort Collins.