Hazardous Waste Specialist for Colorado State University’s Chemical Management Unit

April 2014 - December 2014

Being a hazardous waste specialist for Colorado State University was the most rewarding experience of my college career. I was able to learn about the various state, federal and local regulations for hazardous materials. It also gave me the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge that I was obtained in class to a professional work environment. Being a hazardous waste specialist honed in my knowledge of hazardous waste classification, chemical nomenclature, and safety regulations. I would recommend the internship for anyone who’s interested in building a strong background in hazardous waste, safety, and/or industrial hygiene.

During my time as an intern my main responsibilities were to collect hazardous waste from every lab on CSU’s campus, transport it to our Regulated Materials building where we bulked the waste based on the its hazard class. Bulking chemicals is a unique experience for a college student because you are required to wear type C person protective equipment, which includes a full face respirator, TyVex full body suit and nitrile gloves. Interns must wear this to avoid chemical exposures while mixing chemicals. Hazardous waste pickups and bulking is only one of the responsibilities of the job. As a hazardous waste specialist an intern can gain experience in well water sampling, air quality sampling, performing safety audits, and get valuable certifications that make an individual a competitive candidate for jobs after graduation.

As an intern you are able gain hands on experience by participating in various tasks such as blood spill cleanups, mercury spill cleanups, hazardous waste bulking, and chemical transportation. Since you are expected to know how to handle a situation like a mercury spill you are looked at as an expert in your field when on campus performing these duties. Other colleagues at the university may ask you questions about the job and if they are following proper procedures and regulations. It is a gratifying experience to be seen as an expert in a field while still studying in college.

Since it is a university job the manager, Elden Pemberton, is very understanding with class schedules because he is a student too. The work environment is team oriented but still have
a large amount of independent work assignments. The internship gives amazing real world experience and I would recommend it for any EH major.