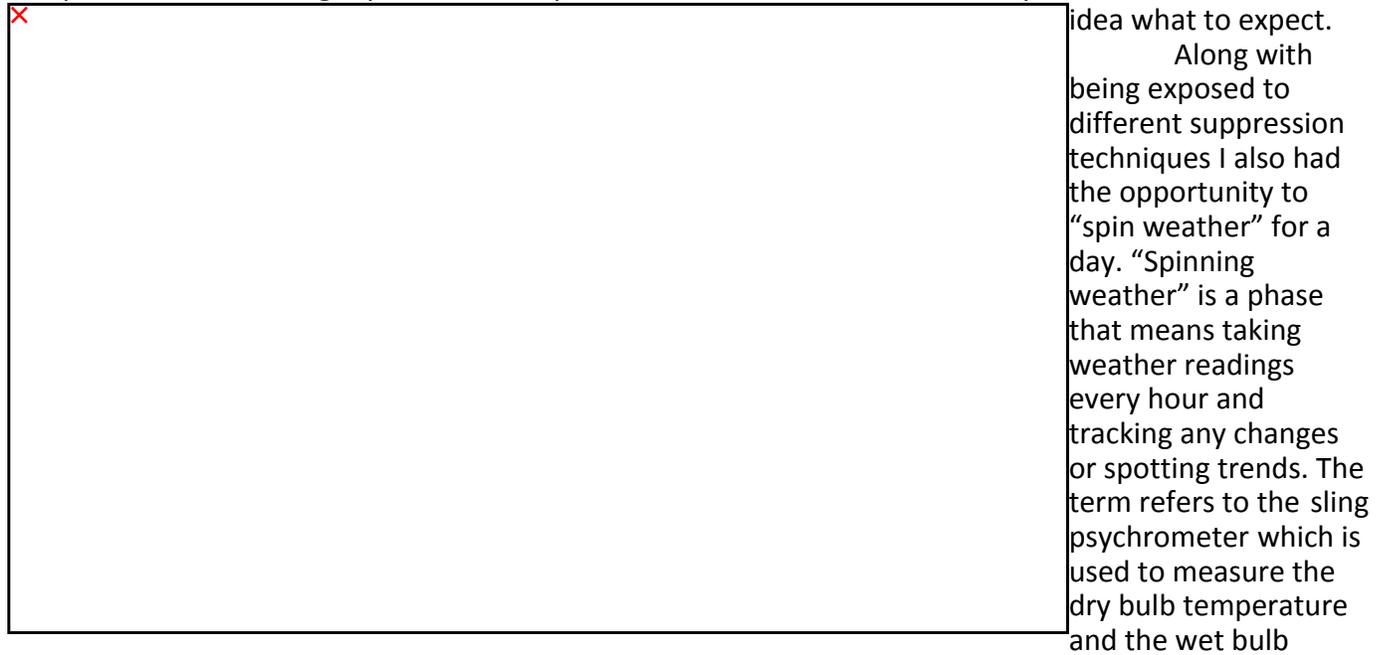


Dregalla experiences Alpine

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I thoroughly enjoyed working with Alpine IHC. I was able to learn more about wildland firefighting and I saw workings of a large campaign type fire. I was exposed to weather observation, teamwork, LCES and self-preservation. During my week with Alpine, I went over of all this. It was my first fire and I had no



idea what to expect.

Along with being exposed to different suppression techniques I also had the opportunity to “spin weather” for a day. “Spinning weather” is a phase that means taking weather readings every hour and tracking any changes or spotting trends. The term refers to the sling psychrometer which is used to measure the dry bulb temperature and the wet bulb

temperature. To obtain the information from the psychrometer, one must spin the device around in a circle, hence “spinning weather”. I have had experience taking weather readings before in a class at CSU. However, actually doing it in the field ever hour for a 15-hour day solidified my previous lesson.

I was also exposed to individual and crew qualities I feel are important. For example I witnessed leadership throughout the trip from several different crew members. In some cases it was from the superintendent, but from my prospective on the crew it was from my squad boss. He had to make quick decisions and stay ahead of the situation. Leadership directly ties into teamwork. I realized how important teamwork really is on the fireline. If all crewmembers are working hard and working together, you can get a lot done in a little time. My experience demonstrated to me teamwork only comes from good communication. While on the assignment good communication of our tasks, fire weather and fire behavior took place up and down the chain of command. If this communication did not take place our leaders would not have been effective, thus our teamwork would suffer.

Good communication is also important for a lookout. On this trip I saw how imperative it was to have a lookout, escape routes and safety zones as well as communications. The fire was constantly changing. If there was not a lookout in place there would have been the making of a very bad event. The first four days on the Duckett Fire the crew was leaving the fireline every couple of hours because of fire activity. The good communication from the lookout indicating increased fire behavior allowed everyone to return to the safety zones via escape routes in plenty of time with no rush or confusion.

Having LCES demonstrated to me on a daily basis with the entire crew had me thinking big scale. However, the final lesson I learned (and maybe the most important) while on this assignment was personal foot care. At the beginning of the trip I had a small blister causing little discomfort. The end of the sixth day this minor blister morphed into an injury causing me a lot of discomfort and time out of work. I eventually had to go to the local clinic because of the harsh pain. I was put on light duty because where the blister started a staph infection began. Had I taken better care of the blister when it was smaller, this problem could have been avoided.

In hind sight, a blister is my body’s way of communicating to me that there is a problem. I was able to listen to the lookout when he directed everyone to head back to the safety zone, but I neglected

my own body telling me my boots were not fitting properly. Next time, I will be listening for all communication loud and direct to small and painful.