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**S**ITUATIONAL **A**WARENESS **M**ATTERS!

What is situational awareness?

And why does it matter?

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**Fire Chief (ret.)**

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If you are interested in hosting a program, please contact Dr. Gasaway at  
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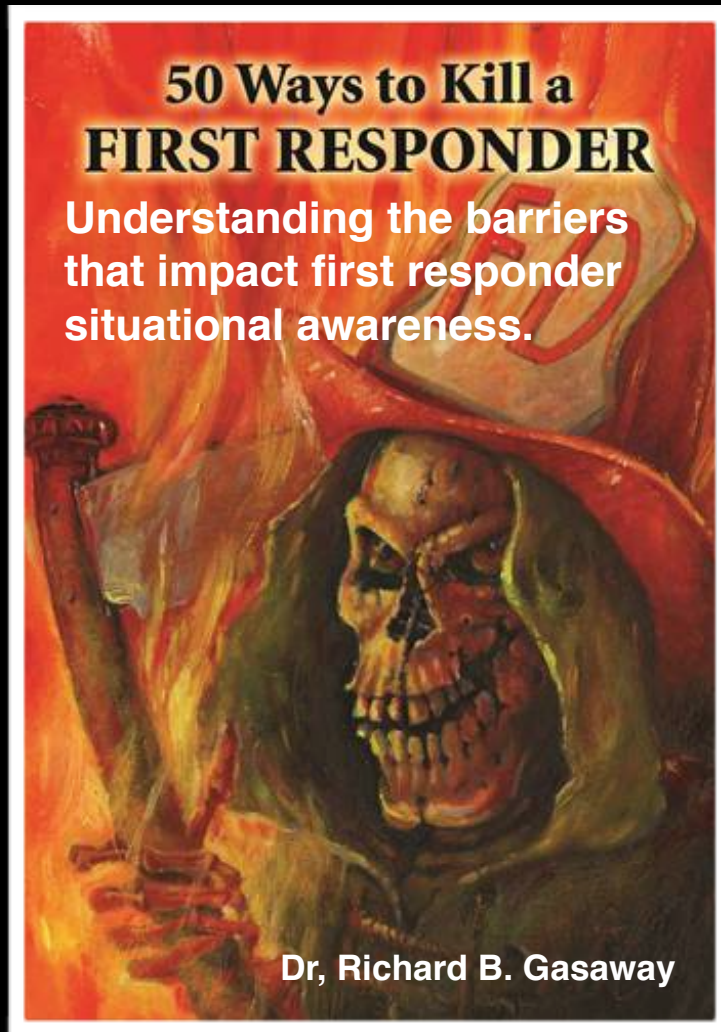


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This program is available  
as a 3 part DVD series.

If you are interested in  
purchasing it:

Click the “store” link on the  
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## **ONLINE ACADEMY**

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**13 courses covering situational awareness  
from A-Z and everything in between.**

**The Academy is suited for individuals and teams working in  
high-stress, high-consequence environments.**

**For more information, visit:  
[SAMatters.com](http://SAMatters.com)**

# Situational awareness

The ability to **perceive** AND **understand**  
what is happening in your environment  
(in context to how time is passing)  
and then, in turn, be able to accurately  
**predict** future events...  
in time to avoid bad outcomes



# The Situational Awareness Development Process

## Perception

**Using the senses to capture information...  
(clues and cues) about the current situation**

- **Pay attention...**
- **Keep your head on a swivel...**
- **Look up, down, and all around...**
- **Actively listening...**
- **Size-up**
- **“What’s happening right now?”**

# The Situational Awareness Development Process

## Understanding

**Making sense out of what you:  
See, hear, feel, taste & smell**

- **Comprehension**
- **Moment of clarity**
  - **“What does all this mean?”**
  - **“Is this what I expected?”**



It seems so easy...

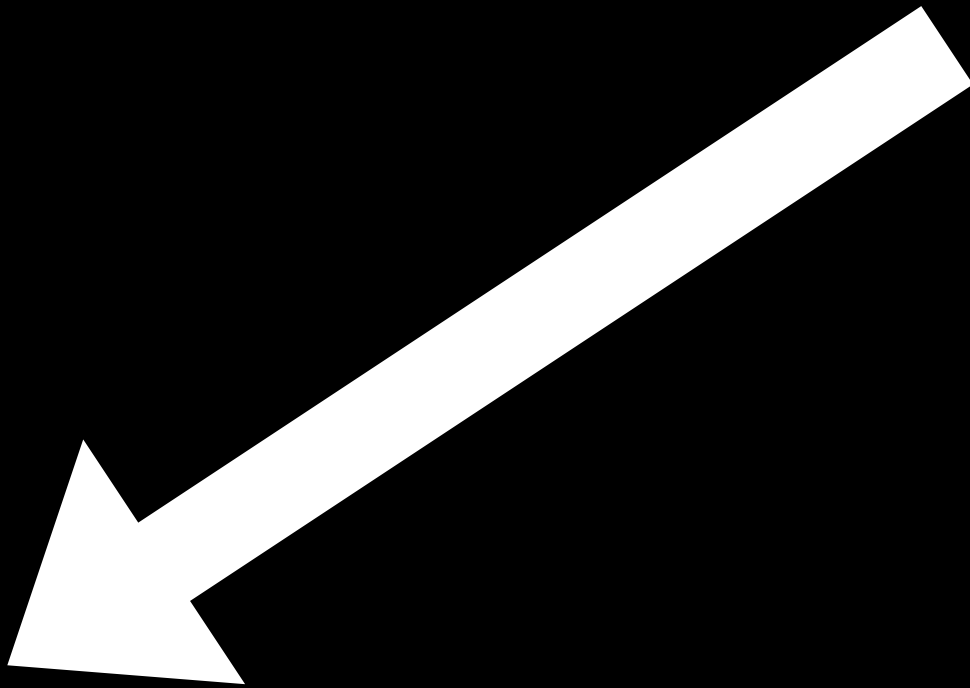
See... and understand.

Hear... and understand.



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**Perception**



**Understanding**

Where in your brain  
do you develop  
your understanding?



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There are puzzle pieces you cannot see or hear.

## Negative Clues & Cues

Only experts can comprehend  
the meaning of the  
missing information.

# Memory Recall

Can trigger the 6th sense.

# Intuition

Pattern Matching

Tacit Knowledge



Intuition:

Knowing...

Without  
knowing...

How you know.



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# Your Red Flag Warning System

*Intuition*



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# There are some problems with intuition:

It is easy to dismiss or distrust intuition.

It is hard to justify decisions based on “feelings” (without facts & data).

Understanding Stress

Intuition can be wrong.



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# The Situational Awareness Development Process

## Prediction

**Anticipating future events before they happen.**

- Run “what if” options in your head**
  - Forecasting**
  - Projections**
- Where is this event headed?**
  - How long is it going to take to get there?**
  - Every event unfolds at a certain pace (speed)**
  - Keeping track of the passage of time.**

The ability to perceive AND understand  
what is happening in your environment

**(in context to how time is passing)**

and then, in turn, be able to accurately  
predict future events...

in time to avoid bad outcomes



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# The Situational Awareness Development Process

## Prediction

**Anticipating future events before they happen.**

- Setting Expectations**
  - Can we change the outcome?**
  - Are the conditions right?**
  - Do we have the right resources... here... now?**
  - Can we operate faster than conditions are changing?**
  - How much time do we have?**



# Imagination

Your Mind's Eye

Sensory inputs  
+  
Visual imagery  
+  
Memory Search  
+  
Forecasting

# Situational Awareness barriers block:

- Perception
- Understanding
- Prediction

# Pre-Arrival Lens

# CONSIDER

Say to yourself... “Maybe...”

Conduct an original size-up to improve the accuracy of your situational awareness.

Avoid making premature decisions based on assumed information.

Have dispatch remind the first-arriving units to conduct a size up.

# Urgency



# CONSIDER

Avoid taking shortcuts, especially those related to SA and decision making.

Avoid the mindset:  
“There’s no time to waste!”

# Over Confidence

# Complacency

CONSIDER

Avoid “created” risk.

Learn from near-miss events.

Never let your guard down.



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# Multitasking



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CONSIDER

Realize as you alternate attention,  
understand information can be lost.

Prioritize & delegate



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# Short-Term Memory Overload



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# CONSIDER

Respect your short-term memory limits.

Focus on the most important information.

Use memory aids:  
(checklists and worksheets).



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# Time Distortion

# CONSIDER THIS

Keep track of the passage of time.

Elapsed time notifications:

The faster the incident conditions are changing,  
the shorter the timeframe for ETNs.



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# Auditory Exclusion

# CONSIDER

Determine what radio traffic is:  
Critical, essential, non-essential.

Use standardized terms & phrases.

Communications training and practice.



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# Tunnel Vision

CONSIDER  
THIS

Tunnel Vision is a rare phenomenon.  
Once it happens, you cannot control it.

Breathing technique.

Stress inoculation.



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# Task Fixation



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CONSIDER  
THIS

Task fixation is extremely common.

You can control it.

Meta-awareness.

Mindfulness.



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# Mission/goal Myopia

## CONSIDER THIS

Can be taught in training  
and reinforced in culture.

Mindset and behavior can be changed through  
teaching, coaching, practice and mentoring.

Teach the process of decision making.



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# Sensory Conflict



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# Mind Drift

Your brain evolved and is  
adapted for survival.

The brain has primal “trip wires” that sense danger.

# Change Blindness



# Sensory domination



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# Confabulation

# CONSIDER THIS

Be aware that in the absence of facts,  
the brain can make up its own reality.

Be alert for differing  
“Perceptions of reality.”



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# FEAR

Failure

Consequence

Embarrassment

Ridicule

# Communications Issues

Lack of Shared Mental Models

# Barriers can steal away your Situational Awareness

**And there are more  
than 100 of them!**

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Helping first responder see the bad things coming...  
in time to avoid bad outcomes.