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SITUATIONAL **A**WARENESS **M**ATTERS!

**Situational Awareness
For Environmental Safety &
Health Professionals**

**Dr. Richard B. Gasaway
Fire Chief (ret.)
Saint Paul, Minnesota USA**

On and off the job...
workers make important
decisions.

Situational awareness

is the foundation for their
good decision making.

It's logical...

**The better you
understand a situation.**

**The better your
decision making will be.**

You can have **TERRIBLE**
situational awareness.

And still make a
GREAT decision.

We call that...

Lucky

Let's program out
some of the luck...

And replace it with a
skillset that can
improve decision making.

Situational awareness

Your ability to **PERCEIVE**

AND **UNDERSTAND**

What is happening
around you...

while being mindful of how time is passing.

And then

Being able to accurately **PREDICT** future events... In time to prevent bad outcomes.

Perception

Using your five senses to gather information about what is happening.

- **I pay attention!**
- **I keep my head on a swivel.**
- **I look up, down and all around.**
- **I actively listen.**
- **I assess the situation.**

Perception...

is the easiest part of the
situational awareness
process.

Conscious

Alert

Oriented

Scanning your
Environment

It's not always
OBVIOUS as to what
you **SHOULD** be
paying attention to.

Just because something is
INTERESTING, does not
mean it is **IMPORTANT**.

Two people

Can look at the same thing...

At the same time...

From the same angle...

And see things differently.

Understanding

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

Comprehension

Moment of Clarity

Ask yourself
some questions.

“What does this mean?”

Example:

You see something
that does not look right.

Ask yourself:
What does this mean?
What could this mean?

“Is this what I expected?”

Flawed Perception of Reality

It seems so easy...

See... and understand.

Hear... and understand.

Situational Awareness Barriers

Anything that blocks or interrupts:

Perception

Understanding

Prediction

Sensory Conflict

Ears

A

Eyes

B

**What happens when the puzzle
pieces don't fit together?**

It causes confusion in the brain.

**Confusion makes a worker
more vulnerable to make
a bad decision.**

Attention can shift inward
in an effort to resolve
the mental confusion.

Mind Drift

Robotic
Action

Acting
without
thinking.

Where in your brain does your jigsaw puzzle get assembled?

Memory Recall

Long Term Memory

The capacity of your
long-term memory:

10 times all the information
stored on the Internet.

You can only consciously access:

5% of your long-term
memory data base.

**Subconscious
Memory**

**Conscious
Memory**

Memory Recall

Can trigger the 6th sense.

Intuition

Knowing...

Without knowing...

How you
know.

How do we know?

If we don't know...

How we know?

Hair can stand up on
the back of your neck.

Your internal voice
talks to you.

Gut Feeling

Your Red Flag Warning System

Intuition

**Subconscious
Memory**

**Conscious
Memory**

Prediction

**Anticipating future events
before they happen.**

Target Outcome

Begin...
with the end in mind.

Visualization

Mentally visualize the task.

Visualize the flow path.

Anticipation

**What could
happen if...**

**My situational
awareness is
impacted?**

Expectations

**What are the possible
undesired outcomes?**

Role

**What role do
I play in
preventing
an undesired
outcome?**

Conditions

**Are the
conditions
right for me
to take
an action?**

Conditions

How can the
changing
conditions or
stored energy
impact
my safety?

Resources

**Do I have
the right
resources
to get the task
completed
safely?**

Time

**How much time should
this task take to complete?**

To predict the future...

Imagination

To predict the future...

Mind's Eye

Situational Awareness Development Process

Perception

Gather information:

Look + listen + smell
+ feel + taste

Understanding

Tap into your conscious &
unconscious knowledge

Decide

Determine your course of action.

Predict

Visualize the outcome of
your decision prior
to implementation.

Predictions drive actions

If the predicted outcome
of your decision is good:

Implement the course of action.

Predictions drive actions

If the predicted outcome of your
action is NOT good:

Evaluate another course of action.

Parting thoughts

Situational Awareness:

- Is a mindset, not a “program.”
- Requires ongoing meta awareness.
- Requires a level of vigilance to surroundings.
- Requires understanding how barriers flaw awareness.
- Is rooted in understanding human error.

Parting thoughts

Situational Awareness:

- Should not be left up to someone else.
- Is impacted by volumes & complexity of data.
- Requires continuous practice.
- Is not correlated to intellect.
- Technology does not create situational awareness.
- Cannot be mastered by attending one class.

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Helping workers see the bad things coming...
in time to prevent bad outcomes.