

Safety Bulletin



Situational Awareness

Situational awareness is being aware of what is happening around you in terms of where you are, where you are supposed to be, and whether anyone or anything around you is a threat to your health and safety. Our knowledge, experience, and education (training) enable us to understand what is going on around us in the work environment and help us determine if it is safe. This means, everyone's situational awareness is individual and potentially different.

Our situational awareness is only as accurate as our own perception or reading of the situation, so what we think is happening may not accurately reflect reality. How we read a situation can be influenced by many things such as the type of information we've been given, our own experience, and distractions in the workplace.

It is important to know how many problems you could face and how serious they are or could potentially be. The temporary loss or lack of situational awareness is a common factor in many incidents. Often there is so much going on in your work environment, or you become absorbed in completing the task, that you fail to spot those things that could pose a serious threat to your health and safety. Situational awareness can also be further reduced in times of high workload or when pressure is applied to get a job completed. In these situations, it's even more critical to maintain a high level of situational awareness to prevent incidents from occurring.

Assessment of your work environment should occur continually, but especially in the following situations:

- When beginning work on a new project/contract/customer location.
- When you think the environment has changed since the last time you were there.
- When you're working with new or different colleagues/contractors.
- Before complacency has set in.

A simple technique to use to improve situational awareness is 'S.L.A.M.'

STOP – Engage your mind before your hands. Look at the task in front of you.

LOOK – At your work area and find the hazards that are present to you and your colleagues.

ASSESS – The effects that the hazard will have on you, the people in your work environment, equipment, and materials. Ask yourself if you have the proper tools, training, and PPE to perform the task safely. Assess whether your positioning is correct, or if there are hazards present that need to be addressed before starting the task.

MANAGE – If you feel that the operation is unsafe, stop working. Tell your supervisor and colleagues. Where required, contact your Regional HSE team to discuss what actions are needed to make the situation safe.