



Toolbox Talks

Situational Awareness



Situational Awareness means paying attention and being aware of what's going on around you. No matter what your role is at work, situational awareness is an important key to keeping everyone safe.

When you practice situational awareness at work, you remain alert and aware of things like:

- where your co-workers are while they are working and what they are doing
- where operational heavy equipment is and how it is moving
- where you are supposed to be and what you are supposed to be doing
- what are the safe procedures for the tasks you are completing
- what sounds you hear or what unusual smells are in the air
- what potential hazards are nearby
- what changes are happening that might affect your actions
- what is going on above and behind you
- what do you see that is out of the ordinary
- what is the weather like, if you are working outdoors

Situational awareness is an on-the-job safety skill that is critical for hazard identification, effective decision making, and accident prevention.

Situational awareness involves three elements which are observation, comprehension, and anticipation.

1. You **observe** what is happening around you and take in all the elements of your environment.
2. You **comprehend** the situation you are experiencing.
3. You **anticipate** what is likely to occur next based on what you understand to be happening now.

There are many factors that will reduce situational awareness that workers must be aware of and make an effort to avoid, including:

- Rushing through a task
- Mental or physical fatigue
- Poor communication
- Daydreaming, loss of focus
- Complacency
- Distractions
- Stress

Safety tips to increase situational awareness:

- Create a habit of regularly assessing the tasks you are doing and your work environment.
- Pay attention to what is going on all around you, including above, to the sides, and also behind you.
- Observe all warning, danger, and information signs.
- Acknowledge cues you are getting from your co-workers, which may be verbal, emotional, or physical.
- Be proactive when it comes to communicating with your supervisor and coworkers. Ask for assistance if you need it, or if it could be helpful.
- Understand the pace of the work environment. Watch for unexpected scenarios and adjust accordingly.
- Avoid using electronic devices including cell phones and headphones.
- Prevent fatigue by maintaining a consistent sleep schedule.
- Ensure complacency is not creeping into the workday.

