**Situational Awareness**

By

Mark Allison KI5MA

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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.

Situational awareness cycle

Situational awareness is a cycle because the situation and people’s perceptions are constantly changing. This internal cycle continues as long as people are awake. Everyone starts with an initial perception of any given situation and then continuously updates it with new information. People gather information through both observation, which includes input from the senses, and communication, which includes face-to-face conversation, written communication, and radio or telephone exchanges.

Simply paying attention is an important part of maintaining good situational awareness, but even more important is determining what to pay attention to. All perceptions are subject to filtering and focusing: people constantly filter information and shift focus. People also produce a lot of internal inputs such as thoughts about what to do next, stress, memories of similar experiences, fear.

Those with more experience in an environment often can more easily filter out distractions and unimportant details and focus on the most salient information.

You must continually assess your work environment before and during every task, but it is especially critical during the following situations:

• When beginning work on a project, even if you have performed the task previously.

• If you think the work environment has changed since your last risk assessment.

• When working with new colleagues, because the task may be new to them.

• When working on high-hazard activities, such as with energy sources, heights and in confined spaces.

• When working on non-routine tasks or something outside of the norm.

This is why we perform exercises, to gain experience, learning by doing. No matter what you role is in an exercise, you can learn something that will help with situational awareness. Not only be doing a task yourself, but by observing others.