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“Situational Awareness in Construction”

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

Situational Awareness means paying attention and being aware of what is 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.
- What sounds you may hear.
- What potential hazards are nearby.
- What you are supposed to be doing.
- What are the safe procedures for the tasks you are completing.
- 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.

Situational awareness involves three elements which are:

- **Observation**
- **Comprehension**
- **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 try to avoid, including:

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

Situational awareness is something that should be happening all the time, throughout the workday. But there may be times when you should increase awareness of your surroundings and your actions, for example, when:

- Starting new or non-routine tasks.
- Working with new co-workers.
- Visitors are at the work site.
- The work environment may have changed.
- There is high stress, or a high workload situation.
- You have a gut reaction that something may be off.
- Beginning work on a project, even if you have performed the tasks before.
- High hazard operations are taking place (examples: near electrical, at heights, in confined spaces/trenches).

Think about some specific examples of what situational awareness may look like on the job.

- Not walking into the “line of fire” when other workers nearby are using tools or equipment.
- Noticing that a co-worker forgot to put on PPE or missed a safety step and speaking up to ensure they follow the correct procedure.
- Stopping a task to make adjustments that will get the job done safely and efficiently.
- Correcting hazards on the spot if you notice something that can be fixed immediately.
- Reporting hazard observations and near miss incidents to management.

The “Slam” Method:

When things are running smoothly, there may be a relaxed awareness as everyone completes their work tasks safely and efficiently.

As situations change throughout the day, some find a simple trick known as the **SLAM Method** to be helpful at promoting situational awareness.

STOP - Think before you act. Consider the task and make sure you understand what needs to be done.

LOOK - Carefully observe the work area to find potential hazards.

ASSESS - Evaluate the hazards and make sure you have the proper tools, training, and PPE to be safe.

MANAGE - Make changes, ask questions, and take the actions you need to continue to work safely.