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"For Safety's Sake - Do Something"

SSOE GROUP IS A PROJECT DELIVERY FIRM FOR ARCHITECTURE, ENGINEERING, AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT.

Remove Those Blinders: Improve Your 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.



Have you ever watched a horse race and noticed that the horses are wearing blinders? This is to ensure that the race horses focus on what is directly in front of them as they run down the track. In our line of work, this can be dangerous. It is easy to talk about the Scope of Work and identify hazards, but once the work starts, there can be so much going on that we become so absorbed in completing the task at hand that we fail to notice the hazards around us. Even the most experienced people can lack situational awareness especially when tasks have become routine and mundane.

For example: Think about how many times you've been so focused on tracing a pipe, texting, or just daydreaming, that you forget to watch where you are placing your feet. Something as simple as this can lead to an employee injury if hazards are present.



To prevent complacency, employees should make a habit of taking quick breaks to mentally assess their surroundings. During this quick break, they should ask themselves: **What around me presents a threat to my safety and health?**

A great technique to do this is to utilize the **SLAM** technique: The SLAM technique is a thorough method employees can follow to improve their situational awareness.

STOP - Think about potential dangers associated with the job.

Stop at each step and ask:

- Is this a new task?
- Has the task changed?
- When was the last time I did this task?
- Do I feel comfortable doing this task?
- If not, do I need training?

LOOK - Identify any hazards.

Look before, during, and after completion of the task:

- Inspect the work area for potential hazards, e.g., unsecured ladders, poor extreme housekeeping.
- Identify the hazards for each step of the job / task.
- Evaluate what to do about them; write a Safe Plan of Action (SPA) or work plan.

ASSESS - The risk. Consider any possible threat of damage or injury.

- Are employees equipped to perform the task safely?
 - check to see they have the correct: knowledge; skills; training; and tools.
- What else do they need to perform the task safely?
- Help? Employees should be encouraged to ask for help.
- More training? Employees should not perform the task until they have been trained.

MANAGE - Implement suitable control measures to reduce the risk.

Managers should take appropriate action to eliminate or minimize any hazards on-site by:

- Ensuring the proper equipment is used and is well maintained.
- Thinking about the task just completed and ask, "What went well? What did not go well?"
- Asking - Did anything unexpected happen?
- Asking - How can I better prepare and plan for this in the future?