



## Public Sector Safety Talks: APERMA

# Paying Attention

Have you ever spent time with someone who was so absentminded or distracted that you wondered how they got through life every day? On the other hand, have you ever known someone who was so observant and attentive that they made you feel a little self-conscious? We all have been on both sides of this equation. Why? Because we all possess different levels of awareness. Individuals all vary somewhat when it comes to this ability. But, **Awareness of Surroundings** is important to accident prevention. While awareness is just one of many individual, situational, and organizational.

So, when is this factor most important? It depends on the job and the situation, of course. But based on some of the most common types of injuries and OSHA violations per year, here are five types of hazards that make awareness absolutely critical on the job.

- Working at heights
- Slip and trip hazards
- Powered industrial trucks
- Hazard communication
- Electrical work

So, what happens if you tend to be have lower awareness? Does that mean you can't work in many of these jobs safely? No, of course not. Statistically speaking, thousands of employees work in these jobs every day successfully even though they would score lower on an assessment or test of **Awareness of Surroundings**. It simply means they have more personal exposure and higher probability of being injured due to this aspect of

their safety profile. The nature of the job, training quality, and company safety culture will all impact this exposure level as well.

However, by learning about oneself and acknowledging the fact that one may simply be prone to greater distraction or forgetfulness in certain situations, a person can easily reduce their risk by engaging in certain precautions and proactive behaviors to make up for their blind spot in awareness. Using checklists, memory aids, developing a habit of triple-checking things, or simply asking a coworker to inspect your work or your PPE are simple ways to do this.

Not everyone can spot every little detail in seconds or have "eyes in the back of their head." But everyone can know their strengths and blind spots and decide to do something about it in order to avoid harm to themselves and their coworkers.



**Any questions or concerns about the above material, please feel free to contact Jim Bergemann or Kathi Williams at 800-274-2788.**

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