



Public Sector Safety Talks - APERMA

Pay 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 factors that lead to injuries, it is a critical one.

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 in the workplace each year, here are five types of hazards that make awareness absolutely critical on the job.

- Working at different heights
- Slip and trip hazards
- Powered industrial trucks
- Electrical work
- Hazard communication—working with chemicals



So, what happens if you tend to have a lower awareness level? 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.

For questions or additional safety topics, please contact Jim Bergemann or Kathi Williams 800-274-2788

“The information contained in this report was obtained from sources which to the best of the writer’s knowledge are authentic and reliable. Arthur J. Gallagher makes no guarantee or results, and assumes no liability in connection with either the information herein contained, or the safety suggestions herein made. Moreover, it can not be assumed that every acceptable safety procedure is contained herein, or that abnormal or unusual circumstances may not warrant or require further or additional procedures.”