



Safety in EMS

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What dangers do we face?

- Austere conditions
- Physical strain
- Accidental injury
- Interpersonal violence
- Opportunistic crime
- Planned ambush
- Hazmat exposure



Topics to discuss

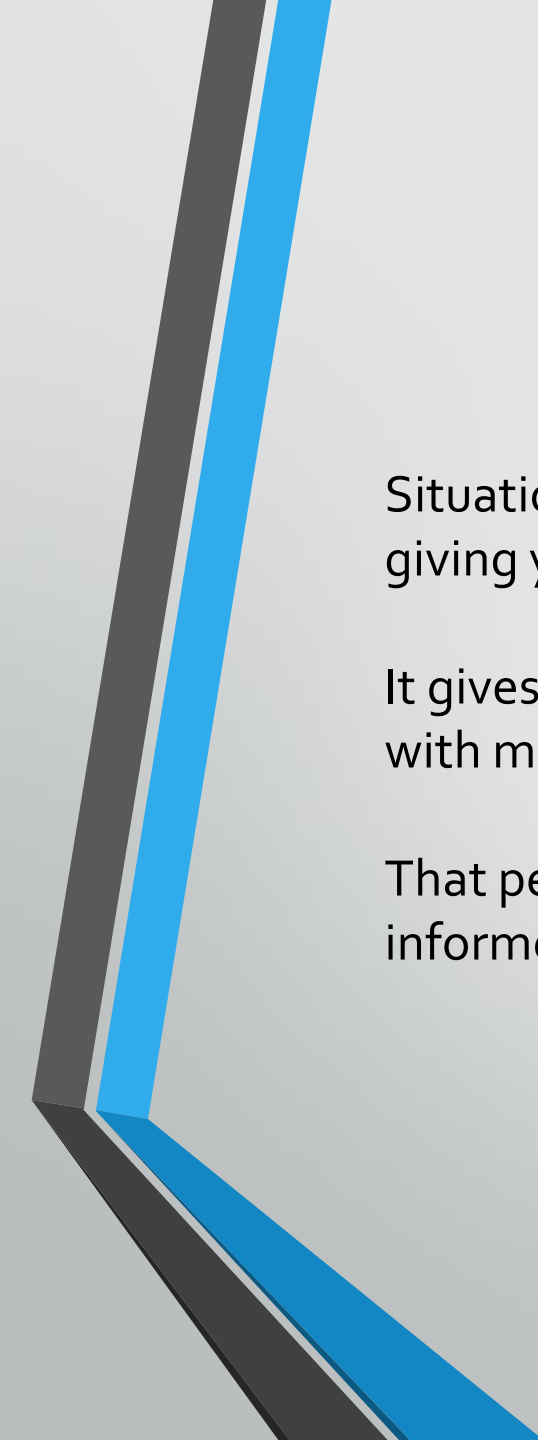
- Situational awareness
- Utilisation of SLAM or OODA
- Combat indicators
- High threat considerations
- Anti-ambush techniques
- Resources

What is situational awareness?

- Knowing what is going on around us:
 - Where am I?
 - What/who is around me?
 - What challenges lie ahead?
- Situational awareness is a mindset, not a skill

Situational awareness





Situational Awareness is the Ability to see clearly what is happening around you, giving you the ability to develop an effective plan in a split second.

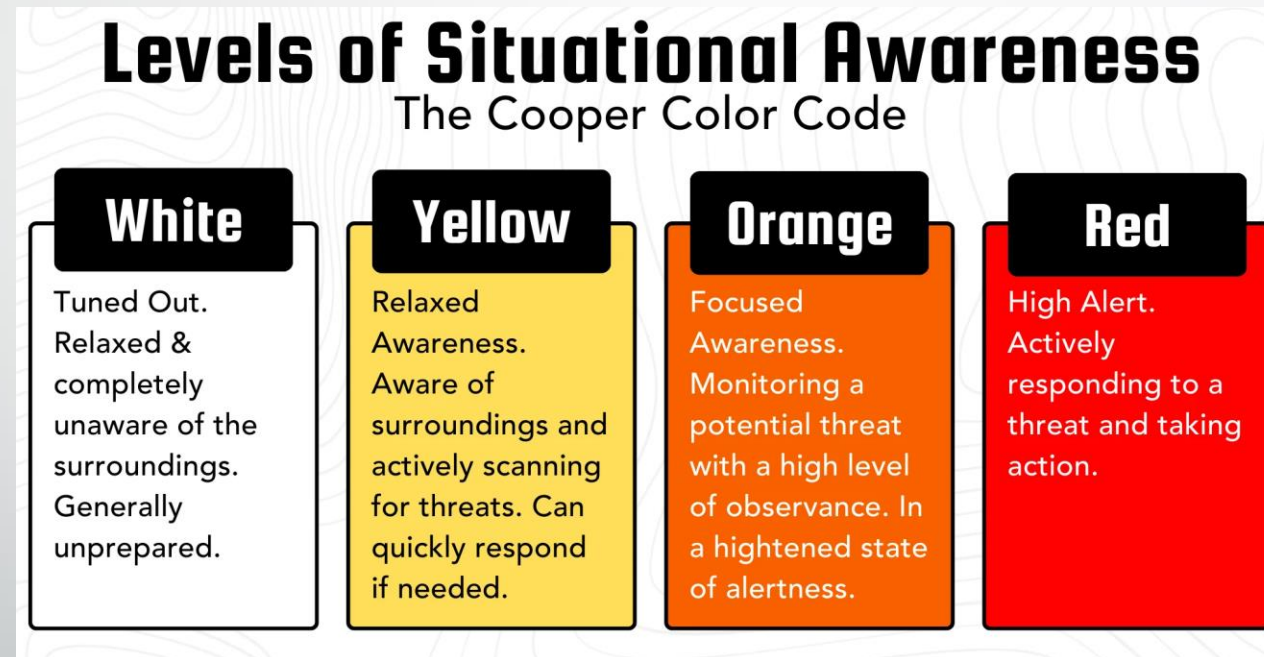
It gives you the ability to see from the bottom up, everything that is around you, with more perspective.

That perspective allows you to clearly assess the situation to make a practical and informed decision.

Don't get trapped in complacent behaviour

- Hear what you want to hear
- See what you want to see
- Task fixated (focusing on one thing)
- Cellphones are a death trap

Cooper's Colours (levels of awareness)



Cooper's Colours Cont.

WHITE	Completely unaware and not paying attention to surroundings.
YELLOW	Relaxed but maintaining awareness of environment.
ORANGE	Sensing a potential threat nearby and beginning to consider your response.
RED	Actively responding to a threat around you.
BLACK	Overwhelmed by fear or stress, rendering you unable to respond effectively.

Barriers to Situational Awareness

Cognitive Overload

- High stress clinical environments, such as prehospital, emergency departments, and intensive care units, can exacerbate cognitive overload.
 - High pace
 - Emergent decision-making
 - Critical patient conditions (severe trauma and peri-arrest state)

Emotional Overload

- Expectation
- Decreased emotional intelligence
- Stress

Improved awareness in stressful situations

- Embrace a serene attitude
- Be attentive but relaxed
- Listen to hear (noises, voices, footsteps, knocking)
- Look to see (shadows, figures, lack of lighting)
- Distance yourself from what you are assessing and get a broader overview
- Make a viable action plan

SLAM or OODA

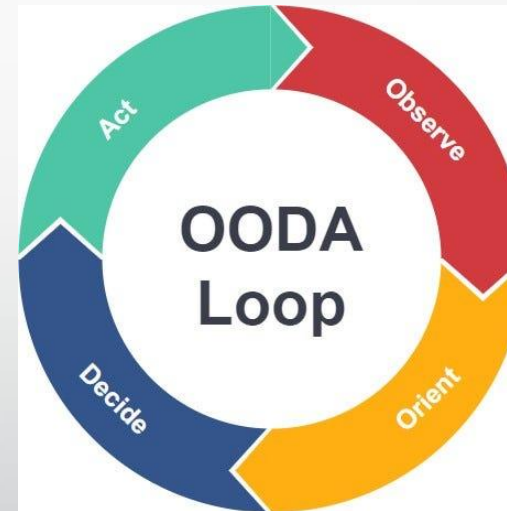
SITUATIONAL AWARENESS **S.L.A.M.**

S **STOP:** Engage your mind before your hands. Visualize your task and be sure you understand what needs to be done before you start working.

L **LOOK:** Identify elements around you - notice threats and non-threats that surround you. These include objects, events, animals, people, political and environmental factors.

A **ASSESS:** Point out the effects the hazards could potentially have on you or others and ask yourself if you can complete your job safely.

M **MANAGE:** Reduce or eliminate risks. If you can eliminate the risk before moving forward, do it. Work with your supervisor on what actions you think are necessary to make the situation safe for you and co-workers .



Observe

What is the current situation? What is the reason you want to change? how bad do you want to change?

Orient

Where are you currently at relative to where you want to go? How far is it to your destination?

Decide

What is the exact path you are going to take? How are you going to handle challenges and set backs?

Act

What's the approach and method you will take to implement the decisions? What is your action plan?

Combat indicators

Behavioural indicators

- Nervousness
- Mental discomfort
- 1000 yard stare
- Repeated comments/prayer
- Muttering
- Difficulty making decisions or answering questions
- Pacing
- Abnormal looking around



Combat indicators

Physical indicators

- Oversized clothes, not appropriate for weather or event
- Keeping hands in pockets or concealing hands
- Repositioning weapon
- Small bulges near waste or hip
- Adjusting waistband or clothing
- Undue attention to carried objects
- Favouring one side
- Blading



Combat indicators

Environmental indicators

- Abandoned streets, when usually busy
- Chaotic streets, when usually peaceful
- Groupings of people at various sections in area
- Restless crowd
- Vehicle driving same route over and over
- Abnormal noises (bangs, distant whistling, etc.)
- Section with poor lighting, or lights go off when you approach



High threat area considerations

- Gain maximal information
- Be prepared mentally (wake up, open your eyes, cellphones down, internal lights off)
- Call the caller when ambulance is close, apologise for the delay, if any
- Don't stand parked at the address
- Limit on scene time (treat while moving)
- Lighting keeps darkness away, park where you can see around the vehicle
- Know the route back out of the area

Anti-ambush techniques

- Switch off your emergency lights when entering area, don't draw attention
- Switch on high beams (brights) and alley lights, look for people and obstacles
- Don't stand still
- Drive around the scene at least once to see what is happening
- Keep windows slightly open
- Music off
- Look for tyres, branches, broken furniture, rubbish next to road
- Know the routes or have a GPS available

Use your available resources

- Police presence
- Barrier tape
- Neighbourhood watch
- Security personnel
- Crowd



Equip yourself to stand a fighting chance

- Improve your fitness
- Improve your situational awareness
- Always carry a flashlight
- Have a combi-tool, which includes a knife
- Carry pepper spray/baton, know how to use it
- Wear body armour
- Build a trustworthy relationships
- Create a social network at work
- Consider self-defence training

Please consider participating in my
research questionnaire:
*Workplace violence as experienced by EMS
personnel in South Africa*

- <https://forms.gle/UPUuhnwmScFhjxsAA>





Thank you