



SAFETY NEWS

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Improving your situational awareness at work.

Every work site contains hazards. For power linemen, these hazards can be dangerous and deadly. Due to this reality, all workers, regardless of expertise, should strive to improve their situational awareness.

Not paying attention to your surroundings puts you and your co-workers at risk of minor or even fatal accidents. The risk is even greater for those workers who repeatedly perform the same task. As the task becomes routine, their situational awareness decreases.

To prevent this complacency, workers should make a habit of taking quick breaks to mentally assess their surroundings. During this quick break, review these key questions.

- What around me presents a threat to my safety and health?
- Is the threat large enough that I should stop working?
- How can I reduce the threat while continuing to work?

Use the **SLAM** technique to improve situational awareness.

STOP

Workers should stop what they are doing to answer the following questions:

- Is this a new task?
- Has the task changed?
- When was the last time I completed the task?
- Should I receive new training?

LOOK

Employees need to look and examine their work areas before, during, and after completing a task. They should inspect for hazards such as suspended loads or unsecured trenches and holes.

ASSESS

Evaluate the work site and task. Determine if the worker can safely complete the new tasks. If not, they should approach managers and ask for more training to improve skills and knowledge. Ask for the appropriate equipment and tools to finish the job safely.

MANAGE

The final phase of SLAM applies to managers. Supervisors should take appropriate action to eliminate or minimize any hazards on site. This can be completed by ensuring proper training and correct tools and supplies are available. Once a task is completed, supervisors should then seek employee input to find out what went well during the job and what complications arose. This will help managers to introduce new measures to ensure employees work in safe conditions and have the tools to succeed.

The SLAM technique and other exercises are not just for new employees. They should be used by everyone to improve situational awareness in the workplace.



Working in Cold Weather

Here are 5 tips to keep you safe this winter.

1. Beware of slips and falls

Roads, driveways, and parking lots can have patches of ice looming where you least expect. It is best to expect slippery conditions. This means walking slowly, keeping hands out of pockets for balance, and using handrails where provided. It is also best to wear shoes or covers with slip-resistant treads. In instances where walking on ice can't be avoided, take small steps and

walk flat-footed with your weight distributed over your feet.

2. Wear proper clothing

Frostbite and hypothermia are both hazards of cold weather. It is important to wear multiple layers of clothing that will keep you warm and dry. The benefit of wearing multiple layers is that they can always be removed if you get too hot. It is also important to have a pair of waterproof boots.

3. Give more following distance when driving

Although driving is routine, it is important to give yourself more time to get to and from work in snowy, sleety and icy conditions. When on the road, slow down and give the car ahead of you an additional 4 seconds of following distance (and more if the conditions are severe). Make a habit of checking road conditions each morning so you can plan your trip accordingly.

4. Drink plenty of liquids

Although many people associate hydration with summer months, it is just as important to drink fluids in the winter. Each time you can see your breath in the cold you are watching water leave your body. Drinking warm liquids also has the added benefit of keeping you warmer.

5. Optimize and conserve your energy

If possible, try to plan the majority of extended tasks for the warmest part of the day. During extended tasks, take frequent short breaks in a warm and dry location. This will warm you up and prepare you for the next exposure to cold weather. Another recommendation is to always work alongside a co-worker. This way you can monitor each other for signs of danger including fatigue, frostbite, and hypothermia.