

## Situational Awareness

By Shannon Smith

It happens to all of us. You work the same job for a long period of time and everything becomes routine to the point that you can go through the motions without thinking. You become blind to the hazards that are all around you. You stop paying attention to your surroundings. You think, "Nothing has happened lately, so I must be safe."

The word "aware" can mean 1. knowing that a situation, condition or problem exists or 2. feeling, experiencing or noticing something (sound sensation, emotion) However, the old Middle English word it comes from was "iwar" and it meant "not trusting someone or something that could be dangerous or cause trouble".

Procedures and checklists are designed to help you remember hazards before you start work. But the most important protective gear you own is your brain.

When you are doing common tasks, try to remember the hazards that are around you. When standing on the deck or near moving equipment, try to visualize what "could" happen and put yourself in a safer position. (Have an escape plan.) If that gear fails, will you be in harms way?

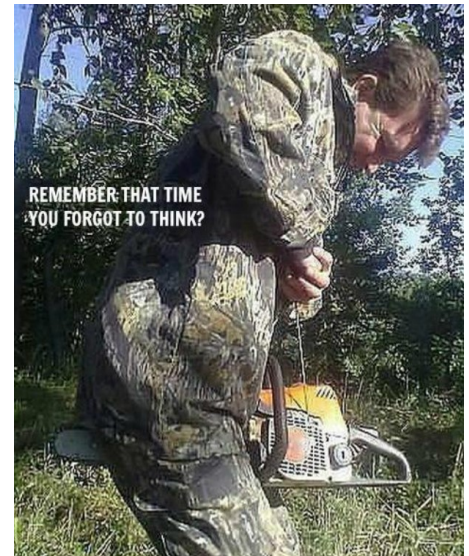
Pay attention to mooring lines and stay out of snap back zones. If the equipment is damaged, how could it potentially harm you as you repair it?

Work warily. Look out for your coworkers. It is often difficult to see dangers around you when you are focused on the task directly in front of you.

## Use your head, not your hands

In the US Coast Guard Lessons Learned there are several examples of personnel acting without thinking while performing common tasks that resulted in injury or amputation. Here are just some reports that came in over several months:

- A man received third-degree burns while feeling for a steam leak with his hand.



**Plan ahead...**



**Alligator Safety**

### TOP 3 Safety Card Hits

(Fleetwide last month)

**Housekeeping 20**

**Tools & Equipment 19**

**Safety Attitude 9**

## Use your head, not your hands

- Another man amputated the tip of his index finger when he placed his hand inside the spout of an ice cream maker to determine if the machine was jammed.
- A sailor was pushing stock into a jointer with his left hand instead of a pushblock when the stock was kicked back and the jointer blade amputated two fingers.
- When a man attempted to start a compressor motor by pulling on the pulley belt, the motor started as planned but too soon for the man to get his hand out of the way. One finger, caught between the pulley and belt, was amputated.
- When a man did not hear a vegetable chopper running because of ambient noise, he reached inside to clean it and sustained deep lacerations and fractures to two fingers.
- While using a commercial rust remover, a man disregarded the instructions to avoid skin contact and allowed the solution to come in contact with his hand. A severe chemical burn resulted.
- Another man placed his finger in a bolt hole to align two flanges. The chain fall holding one flange slipped causing his finger to be amputated.
- And still another case occurred when a watchstander in the after steering compartment inserted his finger in the change pin hole of the trickwheel control lever. His finger was amputated when the rudder was moved.

## Lesson Learned

The USCG determined that, *“The lessons to be learned are self-evident, human carelessness and failure to take simple precautions are frequently significant contributing factors to injuries and deaths.*

**NOT the way to  
support your  
coworkers...**

