

D·PREP
SAFETY DIVISION

Situational Awareness



Contents

Gathering Information from the Environment	3
The Five Levels of Situational Awareness	3
Risk Factors for Violence	4
Practice Situational Awareness	7
Bias	8
Creating Predictions of Dangerousness	9
Large Events	9
Parks	9
Social Gathering	9
Online	9

Gathering Information from the Environment

The Five Levels of Situational Awareness

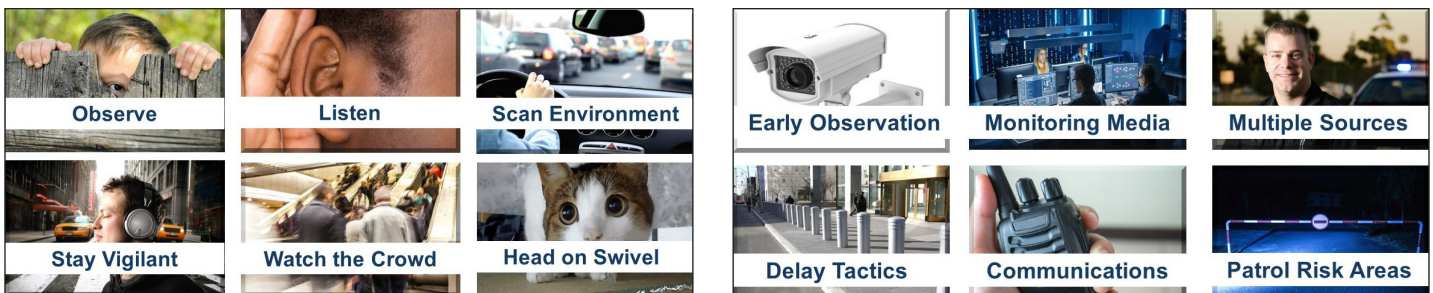
Tuned Out. This level leaves us unaware of our surroundings. If you are tuned out from what is around you, make sure you are in a safe environment or are with someone who is paying attention to your surroundings. Military and police use the phrase “watching your six” to refer to watching what might be outside of your active sight (just as the 6:00 hour on a traditional clock would be behind you as you face 12:00).

Relaxed Awareness. You may be in this state in places where you know the people around you and/or there is an established safety protocol for entry. This may include when you are at a friend’s house with several people you know well or at a ticketed secure event.

Focused Awareness. In this level, there is no direct threat around you, but you are entering a space that presents a potential danger. This may include driving under adverse conditions, walking in a city you are unfamiliar with, or traveling in a place where a “be on alert” warning has been issued.

High Alert. In this level, there is an active threat or dangerous situation close by. This may include someone approaching you with a potential weapon, an erratic driver who has begun to lose control of their vehicle, or someone entering a previously safe space who begins to threaten those around them. Although it might feel safer to be on high alert all the time to reduce potential negative outcomes, there is a physical, cognitive and emotional cost associated with being on high alert for a continuous period of time. Think of a flashlight in a dark environment. Although it may be useful to leave it on the entire time, there should be some consideration for battery life.

Paralysis. Typically, paralysis occurs in the absence of training. Most people are scared and experience paralysis when they first encounter an actively dangerous situation. These situations are often outside of our experiences and comfort zone. The goal of this training is not to remove fear or panic in reaction to a dangerous situation, but rather to learn and train on the correct response until it becomes second nature.

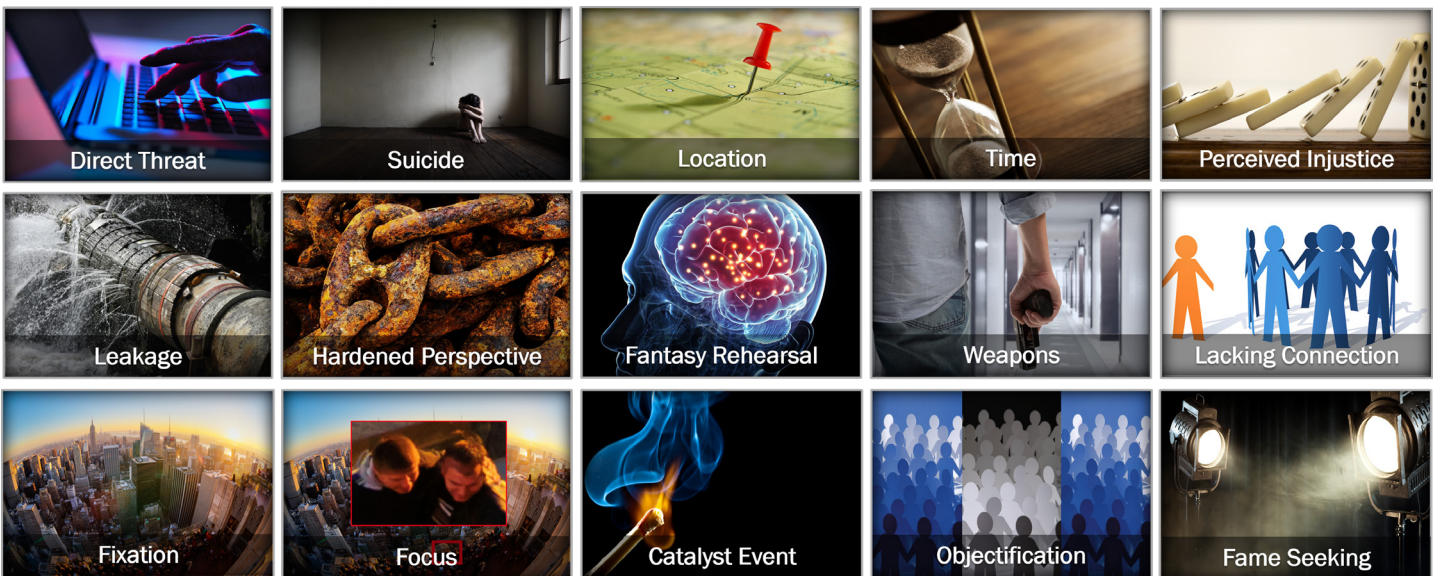


Risk Factors for Violence

Risk factors identify the personality traits, behavioral indicators, social and peer interactions, environmental stressors, threats, acquisition of or access to lethal means, and other contextual clues that have been noted in those who move forward with a targeted attack plan.

A key aspect of understanding risk factors is the importance of seeing these in combination, like puzzle pieces coming together to create a larger meaning. As with a puzzle, one piece alone is not particularly useful. It's when these pieces combine that the factors begin to be more useful in understanding risk.

When conducting a violence risk assessment (VRA), one should avoid emphasizing any single risk factor, such as weapons access or mental illness, without regard to the context of other risk factors.



Direct threat	Indirect threat	Lacks mental support	End of a relationship
Access to weapons	Lacks peer support	Explosive reactions	Inability to date
Hardened thoughts	Lacks family support	Intimidates others	Hopelessness
Social isolation	Loss of job	Lacks empathy	Last act behavior
Victim of bullying	Decline in academics	Polarized thoughts	Legacy token
Substance abuse	Acquiring weapons	Glorifies violence	Feels persecuted
Authority conflict	Suicide attempt	Lacks remorse	Leaks attack plan
Fixation on target	Focus on target	Action plan for attack	Time frame for attack
Fantasy rehearsal	Rejection	Financial loss	Catalyst event
Feels trapped	Poor anger outlets	Fame seeking	Objectification/ Depersonalization

1. **Actionability** is the term used to describe if an individual has access to means and materials to carry out an attack. While firearms present a high level of concern, the VRA should determine if a potential attacker has access to any weapons, not just firearms.
2. A **hardened point of view** is a locked and fixed way of seeing the world that is resistant to other counterpoints. The individual holds a strong investment tied to these beliefs and they are often unwilling or unable to shift from these ideas.
3. **Driveness and a justification for violent action** describe an attacker who is dedicated to committing violence in the name of a particular cause. As they escalate on the pathway to violence, they morally disengage from any external ethical or moral standards, objectify their target, and focus on mission completion.
4. **Grievance or injustice collection** takes on a dangerous characteristic where the grievance or injustice becomes a justification for violence. These grievances are most often held against those in positions of power. The attacker holds them responsible for real or imagined unfairness and difficulties.
5. Most attackers are **suicidal**. They express indifference toward life, hopelessness, and a lack of confidence about the future. They feel disempowered, misunderstood, and lost.
6. **Mental illness** can be an aggravating factor when conducted at VRA, particularly when related to thought disorders, depression, and bi-polar disorder. Most of those who carry out attacks experience psychological, behavioral, or developmental symptoms.
7. The **use of substances**, particularly stimulants, impacts decision making, increases isolation, fosters disengagement, and reduces impulse control. Drug or substance use, particularly methamphetamines or amphetamines, cocaine, or alcohol, has been connected to both affective and targeted violence.
8. Many who engage in targeted violence experience an inability to understand different perspectives. This **lack of empathy and remorse for actions** is an aggravating factor in a violence risk threat assessment.
9. When potential attackers experience frustrations, pain or feel overwhelmed, they engage in **fantasy rehearsals** to reduce their anxiety. These fantasies involve them confronting, punishing and/or destroying the target of their perceived injustices.
10. Feelings of **isolation and hopelessness** are common among those who plan targeted violence. They may experience a lack of social or advancement opportunities at home, school, or work. Most experience chronic isolation and/or an inability to create or maintain sexual or intimate relationships with others.



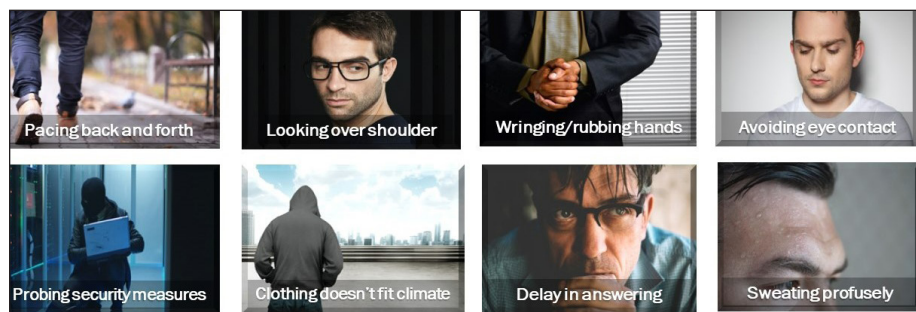
11. Many attackers have felt **marginalized** and expressed despair and hopelessness about a better tomorrow. This results in a perceived threat to those they identify with, causing a sense of moral outrage.
12. A **fascination with violence** is a risk factor that at least half of those experience while planning their attacks. When engaged in a VRA, there should be a careful exploration of the subject's investment, obsession, or fixation on violence. This could include studying past attacks, watching media that shows sensationalized violence against particular groups, drawing pictures or writing essays with similar themes.
13. The **desire for fame** is present as a motivating factor for this kind of targeted violence. Those who feel marginalized, bullied, teased, or isolated expressed a desire for attention and seek retribution for this perceived injustice.
14. As part of the escalation on the pathway, attackers often engage in **objectification and depersonalization** toward their target. They may use hostile language, insulting, images or diminishing/misogynistic objectification focused on separating themselves from their target.

Environmental Factors

1. **Catalyst events** occur when there is a significant loss that occurs in a person's life that causes an escalation in attacker planning. This could be anything the person holds dear in their life such as failing a particularly important class, losing a romantic relationship, being fired from a job, being involved in domestic abuse, drug use, or criminal charges, or the death of a close friend or family member.
2. The experience of **teasing and bullying** are additional escalating factors for the attacker. Bullying and teasing may be physical, social, property, or cyber. About 1/3 of attackers in their study engaged in bullying, often as part of a persistent pattern of behavior which lasted for weeks, months, or years.
3. **Free fall** describes a wide range of problems an attacker may experience in their community, school, work, primary support group, and/or social circle. For those in a free fall, there is little hope for improvement and this often leads to further isolation, suicidality and feelings of despair. As problems spiral (conflicts in the home, academic, legal or disciplinary actions, or other personal issues), there is little preventing them from looking for an escape.
4. When there is a rapid or intense **decrease in academic or work progress**, this can be a catalyst event and lead to further escalation. In many attack cases, the loss of academic or workplace connection becomes the final straw that overwhelms the individual and moves them closer to an attack. Failure to progress in work and school can directly contribute to other areas of life beginning to become unstable.
5. The **social isolation** that occurs when the person has vastly different beliefs from the majority and/or when they see increases in teasing and bullying, is another cause for escalation. This isolation makes the potential attacker feel alone in their thinking and that violence as the only way to be seen. This isolation is often observed by those around the attacker as they isolate themselves, withdrawing from others, appearing sad, or crying.

Practice Situational Awareness

- Practice at home, at work and in the community
- Look for exits and familiarize yourself with the space
- Watch for out of place people, vehicles, or behaviors
- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings
- Avoid electronic distractions. Only use your device when it is safe to do so and keep headphone volume low.
- Scan any new environment for exits, barriers, suspicious people or objects, or anything else unique or unusual.
- Scan familiar environments for anything unusual or out of place.
- Be aware of your biases
- Always have an exit strategy and consider a plan b. Don't forget windows or exits that may be behind you.
- Maintain your calm and engage your senses
- Trust your gut - better to be wrong and safe
- Visualize possible scenarios and plan for what you would do in each case.
- Look for things that may be odd or dangerous. This doesn't mean yelling "bomb!" every time you see a bookbag that isn't attended, but rather paying attention to things that seem dangerous, out of place, unsupervised, or likely to go wrong.
- Find the baseline. Baseline is a fancy way of saying what might appear out of the ordinary in each environment.
- It is a mistake to assume someone is dangerous or suspicious based on their clothing, hygiene, language, nationality, religious beliefs, mental illness, or skin color.
- Leading organizations stress the identification of behavioral threat indicators rather than relying on a profile. Share a concern if you have one but do so in a way that is empathetic and avoids assumptions and stereotypes.
- Keep your dominant hand free to react to any threat.
- Know where to find concealment. Concealment hides us from a potential attacker. This makes it harder for them to aim a weapon at us accurately and gives us an opportunity to run further from the danger. Concealment does not, however, stop bullets or other projectiles and finding cover is a preferred means of response.
- Know where to find cover. Unlike concealment, cover provides us with a barrier that can stop bullets or other projectiles, offering us a wider degree of protection. Objects made from concrete and stone will provide greater protection than sheet rock, plywood, and hollow doors. Likewise, the tires, wheel well and engine block will provide greater protection than the door of a car.



Bias



What is Bias?

Bias is our tendency to see the world from our particular lens of experience. It can lead us to ignore the evidence or make assumptions not based on evidence. It can impact what we remember and what witnesses remember. It can create blinders for BIT team members and impact their

ability to build rapport, connect, and create safe/neutral spaces. While we can never remove bias, we can train to make us more aware of how bias can affect decision making.

Types of Bias

- **Confirmation Bias:** Form an early hypothesis and tend to seek or overvalue evidence that fits it or confirms it. Are you interviewing or validating?
- **Dunning-Kruger Effect:** People who are terrible at a particular task think they are much better than they are, while people who are very good at it tend to underestimate their competence.
- **Anchor Bias:** The tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information we are given about a topic.
- **In Group/Out Group:** The tendency to be favorable toward the group that is similar to you.
- **Blind Spot:** Ability to spot systematic errors in others' decisions.
- **Availability Bias:** Reliance upon readily available (most recent) information.

Where does bias come from?

- Gender, gender identity experiences, and sexual orientation
- Race/ethnicity, world view, and generational expectations
- Mental illness or physical disabilities
- Different cultures or geographic areas
- Veteran history; and religious or political experiences
- Economic differences; and friend or peer groups



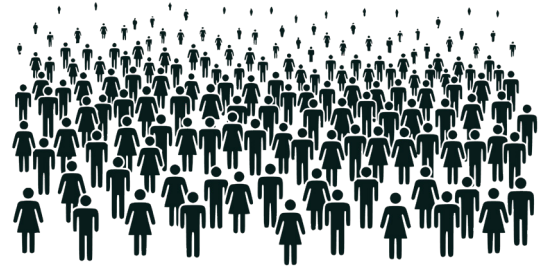
Don't Let Bias Steer You Wrong

- Look at behavior, not appearance
- Be aware of how cultural differences affect behavior in some situations
- Catch yourself if you find you are ignoring things or people based on your biases
- Think about times your biases have made you misread a situation
- Consider each type of bias above and when you have fallen victim to it

Creating Predictions of Dangerousness

Large Events

- If you are bumped, check your valuables
- Be cautious of “let me help” set ups that lower your defenses.
- Map out potential escape routes in case of emergency
- If the crowd begins to move, move with the crowd diagonally.
- Don’t stand near fixed objects (stage, stanchion).
- Don’t go low in crowd, this raises the risk of being trampled.



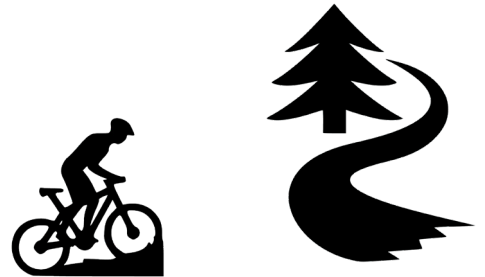
<p>BE CAUTIOUS OF GENERIC EMAILS Always be wary of messages with generic subject lines or messages.</p>	<p>From: Webmail Master Security (webmastersecurity@webmail.com) Subject: Urgent Email</p> <p>Dear Webmail User,</p> <p>You are required to authenticate your account below to continue sending and receive messages. We strongly advise you to update your web/Domains and avoid termination. Follow the link to verify your email address immediately. www.securetechnologies.com</p> <p>Failure to update might process your account as inactive, and you may experience termination of services or undue errors. Please comply with new server requirements and read through the attached privacy policy.</p> <p>Wondering why you got this email?</p> <p>This email was sent automatically during routine security checks. We are trying to protect your account so you can continue using services uninterrupted.</p> <p>Thanks, Webmail Master ©2017 Webmail Domain</p> <p>example-attachment.zip</p>	<p>BAD GRAMMAR/SPELLING Phishing emails often contain misspelled words and bad grammar.</p>
<p>SUSPICIOUS URL Hover over links included in emails to see the actual destination of the URL.</p>	<p>UNNECESSARY URGENCY If something feels wrong, consider calling the organization or office directly to validate the email.</p>	<p>SUSPICIOUS ATTACHMENT Avoid opening attachments that seem suspicious or come from a sender you do not know.</p>
<p>IMPROPER USE OF COPYRIGHT Watch for improper use of copyright information. This is used to make the phishing email look official.</p>		

Online

- Keep your device in your control.
- Choose a quality password and keep it secure.
- Be cautious completing quizzes on social media.
- Avoid public WIFI hot spots.
- Know what phishing schemes look like and how to avoid them.
- Review your privacy settings and make sure to log out.

Parks

- Remote areas have limited cell service.
- Let others know where you are and where you are going.
- Have a plan for getting help if you become hurt.
- Headphones reduce awareness of potential threat.
- Know the area and have multiple exit plans in case of crisis.
- Consider carrying a flashlight or defensive weapon (e.g., keys).



Social Gathering

- Make use of a buddy system.
- Use caution when giving social information to people you don’t know.
- Stay and leave with the friends you came with.
- Make your own drink and keep it in your hands the whole time.
- If someone tries to enter your stopped vehicle, sound horn and drive away.
- If drinking, have a plan (sober ride) to get home.

