

Safety Note # 185

## SITUATIONAL AWARENESS



According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in 2015, there were an estimated 1,197,704 violent crimes committed in the United States. An estimated 15,696 murders, 90,185 rapes and 327,374 robberies took place nationwide that year. As you go about your daily business, you need to be aware of your surroundings, the people in your vicinity, and the activities taking place to be safe from harm. This is known as Situational Awareness. People who practice Situational Awareness are less likely to become a victim.

**Situational Awareness** is the ability to observe, identify, process, and comprehend what is taking place in your surroundings.

Here are a few ways you can practice and improve your situational awareness:

- Park as near to the building entrances as you can. Park in a visible and well-lit area.
- If you need to stay late in the office, move your vehicle to a closer location when others leave.
- Do not exit the vehicle if someone is loitering or looks threatening.
- When entering a building, observe and get to know where exits, fire extinguishers, emergency pull alarms, first aid kits, and stairwells are.
- When walking, pay attention to your environment, **do not be looking at your phone!**
- Being preoccupied, such as with your phone, will make you an easy target.
- If you suspect you are being followed or feel threatened when walking, go to a public area or into the first open storefront you see. Don't be caught alone!
- Keep valuables out of sight if you are in suspected areas and crowds.
- Be aware to not walk into mobs, including protests. These can be dangerous situations, which can escalate and turn violent. Find an exit.
- When in a restaurant, try to face windows and entries to observe what is taking place.
- When in a social gathering, occasionally scan the area for potential problems. Pay attention to the mood of the room. Look for a quick way out if needed.
- When in the workplace, be aware if someone is unknown and is loitering or looking around.
- Pay attention to sounds in your workplace. Be alert if something sounds unusual, especially loud and angry voices.
- If you come across unattended boxes or bags that look unusual or suspicious, ask around if someone misplaced them before investigating. If suspicious, inform building security or management, tell others in the area and call 911.
- If visiting an unknown location, check first if it is a known crime area or has other dangers. UC ANR's travel safety website has links to planning tools and security briefs for UC employees, see: [http://safety.ucanr.edu/Programs/Business\\_Travel/](http://safety.ucanr.edu/Programs/Business_Travel/)
- Observe if someone is dressed strangely, such as wearing an overcoat in the heat.
- Pay attention to what people have in their hands. If you see a weapon or what could be a weapon, stay away from them! Leave!
- Pay attention to other people's behavior, are they agitated, angry, under the influence, aggressive, or acting strange?
- Be aware of unusual or powerful chemical smells.

Make it a habit to practice situational awareness. It can prevent injury or save your life.