



# Neighborhood News

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- Situational Awareness

I teach out in the community several times a week. Largely, I get asked “how do I keep my family and me safe”. Unfortunately there is no golden answer to this question. We can develop strategies that will help minimize our exposure to dangerous situations and aid us in responding appropriately, if we do become involved in a critical incident. I use the same line of thinking when I am at work or out with my family at dinner, the movies, or shopping (basically everywhere).

## Situational Awareness

If you have heard me speak before on this topic then this will hopefully be a good refresher. Situational awareness begins with self-awareness. I have to know and understand where and who I am, before I can properly assess what is going on around me.

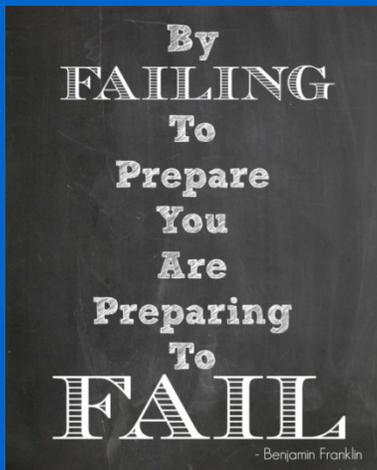
An old military term is “keep your head on a swivel”. You have to constantly be aware of what you are doing and what is going on around you. If a situation doesn’t seem right or look right then why would I want to interject myself into that situation, if I have a choice? Many people “walk” into a bad situation, simply because they were not aware of their surroundings or who they are dealing with.

Safety begins with us; it starts with each individual actively making an effort to live safely, prevent crime, and report suspicious activity.

Sometimes forgotten are the more individual aspects of crime prevention: merely recognizing a dangerous situation or a potential one is only half of the answer. We have to have a plan set in place that will allow us to increase our success rate in any given scenario.

Preparation is defined as the action or process of making ready or being made ready for use or consideration.

If we do not prepare for a critical incident then our likelihood of an appropriate response is reduced. That



**Before anything else,  
PREPARATION is  
the key to success.**

Alexander Graham Bell

critical incident could be a natural disaster or armed violent intruder; think about fire drills when we were in school.

If a critical incident occurs at your place of business or out to dinner with your family, your reaction to such an incident will depend greatly upon how much you have prepared.

Working through these problem solving decisions can be a slow process but an extremely important one, especially when time is critical. An individual's fight or flight process is controlled by their subconscious mind. The subconscious mind also stores learned behaviors.

During a critical incident, time is very important. The quicker we respond to a critical incident or even identify a potential dangerous situation the likelihood we will prevail in that environment is increased.

How do we increase our reaction time? The more prepared we are, the more effective and efficient our response will be. Preparation can be as simple as where you sit while eating dinner at a restaurant, or the seat you choose when you are watching a movie at a theater. Know where your exits are and how to get to them. My point is, have a plan "if this" occurs I will "do this".

When I was training new officers, who recently graduated from the police academy, we would go over "what if" scenarios, when he had down time. I find myself doing the same thing with my family and friends. I always have a plan and you should too; the more people you let in on your plan the better. Any plan is better than nothing and it does not have to be a complicated one.

My point behind this article is to have you understand that having a plan and being prepared is one of the best strategies you can use in everyday life.

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