

FIREFIGHTER SITUATIONAL AWARENESS - WHAT WILL AFFECT IT?

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Abstract

Firefighting is an extremely dangerous and stressful activity that occurs in dynamic and unpredictable environments. This paper reviews the role of the safe place and safe person approach in managing safety on the fireground and argues for an integrated model, linked with this is the dynamic risk assessment model utilised to ensure risk assessments are undertaken. Situational awareness is discussed looking at Endsley's model comprising of three distinct levels being 1. Perception of the elements in the environment, 2. How the perceived elements interact, and 3. Prediction of future status based on the information known in elements 1 and 2. Importantly the need for training of firefighters in the application of situational awareness and an understanding of the potential flaws in cognitive processing during application. The model is discussed with a review of some of the limitations placed on a firefighter based on the environment and the cognitive capacities.