



## 35. Situational Awareness

*A man was going to take a picture of his family at a lookout point along the highway in a national park. He lined the family up and started to back up to get the shot. He hopped a fence so he could get a better picture and continued to back up. He went too far and fell down a steep embankment, sustaining injuries that would keep him off work for at least a couple of weeks. I'm sure he will remember that picture for a very long time.*

At times, it's easy to become so focused on the task at hand that you become oblivious to everything around you, including your own safety. You lose awareness of the whole situation. Safety depends on being aware of the big picture. Fighter pilots have a name for this – they call it situational awareness, or SA. Without it, they can get into trouble.

Here's what I mean. Pilots may be concentrating so hard on following their leader's wingtip to keep that perfect formation that they don't realize they are coming too close to the ground and are in extreme danger.

Few of us are in a position to fly a fighter jet, but that doesn't mean we won't be injured by losing our situational awareness. Here's how some of these injuries happen:

- *A mechanic walks into a grease pit even though he has been working in the same building for 10 years and knew it was there.*
- *A painter concentrates so hard when painting the last few inches of a gutter that she reaches too far and falls off the ladder.*

By maintaining an awareness of where you are and what is around you, you can help yourself avoid falling and being injured or possibly killed.

**THINK AND BE SAFE** ... AT ALL TIMES!