

There has been an undeniable increase in hostility toward utilities across the country. For a growing segment of the population, public service providers, regardless of the organizational structure, are adversaries to be challenged.

For employees and contractors alike, jobsite violence isn't "becoming" a thing, it already is. Yet, field security issues don't receive the

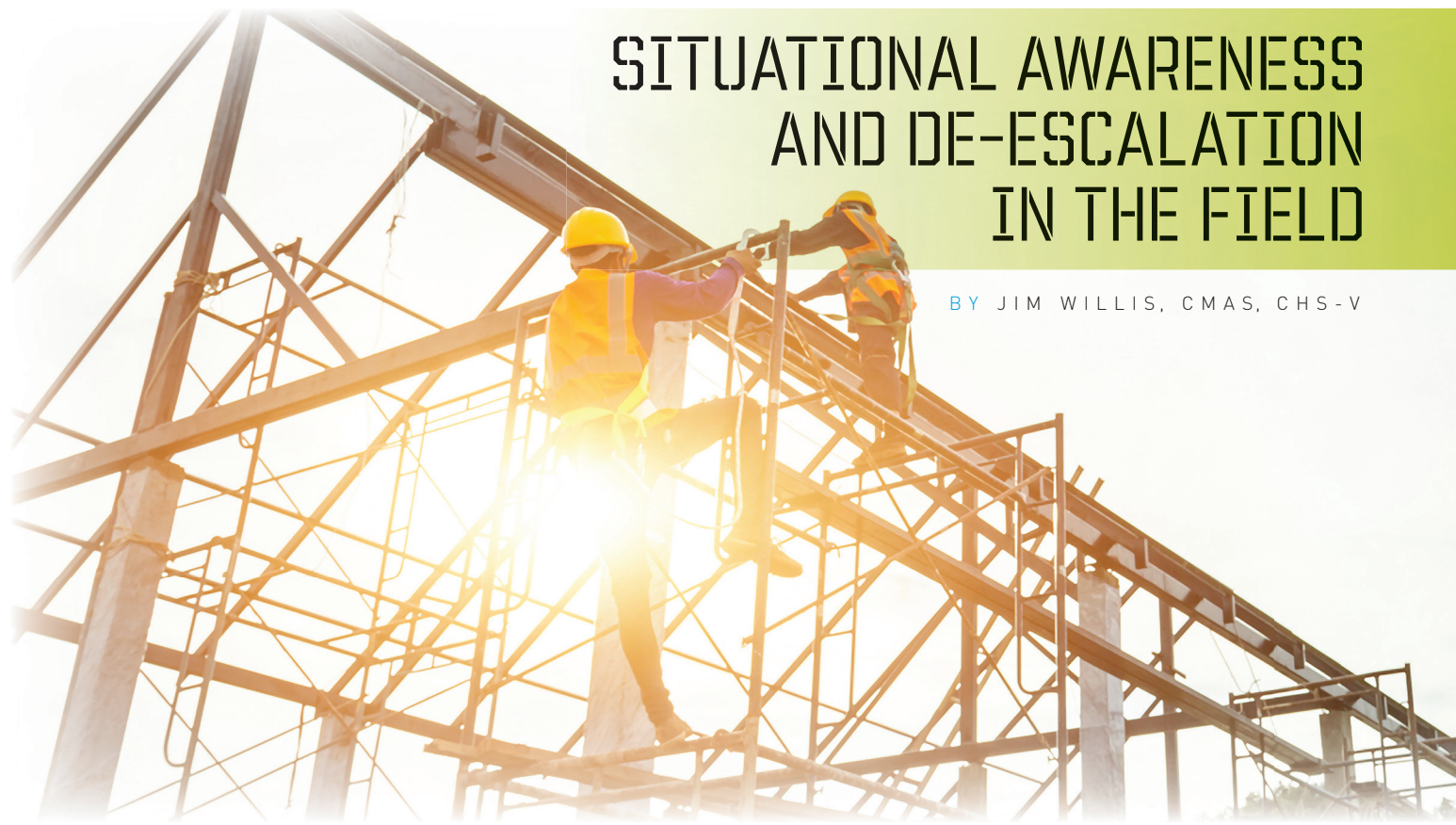
Safety is protection against stupidity, carelessness, and happenstance. Security is protection from intentional harm and aggression.

Safety is static and procedure driven, security in the field is fluid and approach driven. Safety procedures are based on verifiable historical consequences. They are static because the basics don't change. Safety focuses on your actions; if you follow the safety

Situational Awareness is the foundation of effective security, everything else revolves around it. The U.S. Coast Guard has a great definition of situational awareness, "Situational awareness is the ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical elements of information about what is happening to the team with regards to the mission. More simply, it's knowing what is going on around you."

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND DE-ESCALATION IN THE FIELD

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same attention as safety issues. It may be because security isn't as easy to understand. The relationship between safety, equipment maintenance, and worker injury is a straightforward equation. But the correlations between security, training, and violence aren't as simple. Still, they're just as real.

To improve security in the field, focus on the basics. Start by understanding the subtle differences between safety and security. The two words are often used interchangeably, but they're not the same thing.

Fundamentally, safety saves us from ourselves, security saves us from others.

procedures, you stay safe. For instance, wearing a hardhat reduces injury. If you choose not to wear one, you may get away with it, or you may suffer the consequences. It's that simple.

Security in the field is dynamic, with many variables. The danger here comes from other people's, often unpredictable, actions. This makes field-focused security fluid. Good security approaches are responsive, not reactive. They are improved by tradecraft skills and methods that support the on-the-fly processing of information to determine what's happening and why, and how to respond.

"Knowing what is going on around you" is the essence of situational awareness. And it isn't hard to put into practice, you just need a grasp of the concepts and a little training. Situational Awareness uses macro-level and micro-level components to get in front of the problem. Macro-level awareness is monitoring and evaluating local and national events, such as major rate increases or disturbing news reports that increase hostility, for impact on a community. Macro-level awareness allows you to take preemptive measures to avoid violence. Once you evaluate the macro-level issues, situational awareness becomes a micro-level exercise.

Your security is your responsibility.

Aggression erupts into violence astonishingly fast and you're the only person with any chance of preventing harm. This makes situational awareness a vital skill.

Realize that it's impossible to maintain heightened awareness all the time. To try would interfere with accomplishing your job. To remedy this, you need to understand your environment before you start to work. Then take steps to control your work

signs of a deteriorating situation.

Baselines come from observations of the environment, setting, and demeanor of the local population. Establishing a baseline takes skill. But luckily, it's a learnable skill that, with minimal training, you can employ with reasonable effectiveness.

The environment is the social setting and physical space that you inhabit at the time. Every community has its own routines, inhabitants, pace, language, and code of conduct; all of these are characteristics of the environment.

The setting is the changeable elements within the environment that vary with time and conditions. Weather, temperature, business operations, and population changes are all elements of the setting.

Demeanor is the behavior of the community and the individuals within it. How someone acts can point to signs of trouble. Once you identify the baseline demeanor, it's easier to detect anomalies and hostile individuals.

Awareness platforms

After you've surveilled the area and established a baseline, you need to establish an awareness platform. This will help you maintain a reasonable level of awareness while you work, and alert you to environmental changes, anomalies, and unwarranted approach.

Awareness platforms will be different at each location, ranging from the use of vehicles and equipment arranged as a barrier around the worksite to simply surrounding the area with safety cones and tape barricades or having someone monitor the surrounding area.

Effective situational awareness hinges on noticing little things. By establishing a baseline, creating a platform, and noticing anomalies, you'll be able to pick up on subtle changes and enhance worksite security.

De-escalation

First, realize that you can't de-escalate every situation, so don't try. And remember that confrontations are fluid and can change astonishingly fast. You'll need to quickly decide if de-escalation is possible. If it is, then remain mindful of signs that

the conversation is deteriorating. If you see the situation spiraling out of control, leave.

The goal of de-escalation is mastery over mounting aggression without minimizing, insulting, or embarrassing the other person. It's not to win an argument. To engage in effective de-escalation, you need solid de-escalation skills. The good news is that almost anyone can learn to de-escalate volatile situations. With minimal instruction and practice, you'll increase your ability to de-escalate aggression.

Most hostile encounters revolve around core issues such as fear, apprehension, or a perceived lack of respect. Realize that the core issue will be historical and may have taken place years or decades ago. It can even be something that happened to someone else, but it's still real to the person involved. Once you identify and deal with the core issue, your chances of de-escalating the conflict go way up. Now it's time to put your de-escalation skills into practice.

Situational awareness and de-escalation in the field takes skill and requires a commitment to learning. Look for training that addresses the problems faced in the field. And find a trainer that understands the unique needs of your profession.

Finding the right training program and trainer can be challenging. When you start looking, you'll find people claiming security expertise everywhere; especially among law enforcement, ex-military, and martial arts practitioners. Many of these people will have excellent capabilities. However, much of their training will be more tactical in nature than work-related.

Civilian security training isn't the same as military or law enforcement training, and it isn't all theory and formula. Effective civilian security training pulls relevant parts of each of these methods into a program supported by real-life experience with the profession of the audience. Make sure your training meets your specific needs. **ESG**

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area, be alert to changes in your environment, and restrict approach access.

Effective awareness begins as you enter the area. Take note of the existing environment and establish a baseline of normalcy, i.e. what's normal here. Then add to your baseline information until you have a clear picture of the current situation. With a complete picture and baseline, you will be able to notice environmental and situational changes. Situations tend to worsen in stages. Seldom will one drastic sign or change take place when a situation changes. If you reach a point where you have one glaringly obvious sign that something bad is about to happen, you probably missed other

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