

# Safety and Health

## ***SAFETYSHARES!***

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### **Working while in the Grips of Frustration!**

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, *Mindset* is a mental attitude or inclination. And with the wrong mindset – especially when we are working in the field – we can lose our focus on the task we are performing. Indeed, the wrong mindset is an accident precursor.

Experts in the field of Accident Investigation have identified four specific mindsets that cause accidents:

1. Rushing. Feeling a constant pressure to complete tasks as quickly as possible.
2. Frustration. The feeling of being upset or annoyed, especially because of the inability to change or achieve something.
3. Fatigue. Extreme tiredness resulting from mental or physical exertion or illness.
4. Complacency. Self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies (Complacency can be the most dangerous mindset that results in an injury).

This week, I would like to focus on the second category: Frustration.

Anyone who's been frustrated knows it can consume a lot of your mental energy. This can significantly impact your situational awareness. Situational awareness is your attentiveness to your surroundings. This includes knowing where equipment, materials – objects in general – as well as people are in relation to your immediate location. Without an acute sense of situational awareness, the likelihood of an accident or unwanted/unplanned event is increased.

Depending on the level of frustration, your brain can be hijacked by whatever is causing your anguish and/or worries; thus, consuming your thoughts when you should be focused on work activities and the hazards within your immediate environment. Below is a list of some sources of frustrations that can impact your awareness level:

1. Receiving incomplete or inaccurate information from dispatch about the nature or details of the of the emergency you are responding to.
2. Delayed response times because you had to wait at the station for a crew to come from home before you could respond.
3. Fellow crew members that did not know how to perform their jobs effectively (this includes not only technical job knowledge but also being physically unfit to perform the duties, causing a crew member to fatigue quickly).

4. Tasks not being completed as quickly as you expected your crew to complete the tasks or tasks not being completed at all.
5. Independent actions (i.e., freelancing). Crew members performing actions that are not consistent with the overall incident objectives, causing confusion and safety concerns.
6. Crew members complaining about having to do their jobs or complaining about the some aspect of serving the customer.
7. Inadequate equipment to get the task done efficiently or general lack of equipment or other resources.

This is not a complete list of frustration sources as without a doubt, we can all think of quite a bit of our own personal sources of frustration. And, you'd probably admit that your mind wasn't completely on-task while you were pre-occupied with one of these "sources of frustration."

The bottom line is that being frustrated can draw your attention away from your task as well as reducing an awareness of your surroundings; leaving you vulnerable to the risks of a serious injury.

And frustration cannot just be a concern in the workplace, but in our personnel lives as well. Take, for instance being upset or frustrated when you get behind the wheel of a car. Losing focus on the task at hand (in this case, driving) can result in a very serious outcome.

There is too much at stake if your situational awareness erodes. So, if you find yourself frustrated over a personal and workplace issue, you need to recognize the potential risk you are placing yourself and coworkers. If you notice a coworker showing angst or a loss of focus on the task at hand, please take the effort and ask if she or he is feeling OK. It's worth everyone's time to pause work and talk. If a coworker (or yourself) cannot snap out of it, it may be best to take a break or change work assignments (if applicable); just to ensure the level of risk is reduced to a more manageable level. And, if you or a fellow worker cannot get back on track, it may best for everyone involved, for that person to sit out until they can regain their focus.

**When you do something noble and beautiful and nobody noticed, do not be sad. For the sun every morning is a beautiful spectacle and yet most of the audience still sleeps.** – John Lennon (80 years of captivating our love of music - October 9, 2020)