

## Awareness Color Codes

### Article

The late Colonel Jeff Cooper, combat veteran, author and founder of the world-renown firearms training center, Gunsite Academy, developed a color-coded awareness chart. This chart, which is still in use today, has 4 colors associated with a different level of awareness. The first color is white, and progresses to yellow, orange and finally red. The following is a brief description of the color codes:

Condition white is a mental and physical state of unawareness and unpreparedness. Your guard is down. Things are happening all around you and you do not notice them or react to them.

Condition yellow is a relaxed alert level. There is no specific threat, but you recognize that the possibility is there. You're aware of things that seem out of place or out of the ordinary, and you're cognizant of people around you and their actions.

Condition orange is where you observe a specific threat. You make mental preparations to avoid, retreat or, if needed, engage the threat.

Condition red is the threat has come to fruition. You are actively engaged with this threat.

The majority of the time we should be in condition yellow. It is physically and mentally exhausting to be in a constant condition orange, and too lackadaisical and vulnerable to be in condition white (although we observe people operating all day long in condition white.)

I believe we firefighters actually participate in this color chart of awareness as it relates to the calls to which we are dispatched . For example, a dispatch of "check fire out" would most likely find the responding firefighters in a condition yellow, while a dispatch of a "working fire" would elevate their awareness and readiness to condition orange then red. An "assault" or "overdose" in a known bad area of town might prompt a condition orange. We have learned and conditioned ourselves to have a certain level of "readiness" based on the call. The problem with this is that often times we do not have all of the information of the incident until we arrive on scene. Even with the latest technology of Mobile Computer Terminals, the information is only as good as the person telling it.

By Chief Michael Ong