

# Assess the scene



## Safety risks: the environment

### Identify relevant environmental dangers.

A good way to identify dangers is to ask people to think about what they could look, listen and smell for. For example:

Look for...	Listen for...	See if they can smell...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposed electrical wires</li> <li>Fire or smoke</li> <li>Risk of explosion (e.g., carbon monoxide)</li> <li>Dangerous items (e.g., weapons, unexploded bombs)</li> <li>Dangerous weather patterns (e.g., tornados)</li> <li>Potential falling hazards (e.g., tree branches)</li> <li>Potentially unsteady ground (e.g., building rubble)</li> <li>Non-verbal cues from bystanders</li> <li>Incoming traffic or unstable vehicles</li> <li>Violent people</li> <li>Strange-looking devices or things that look out of place (e.g., improvised explosives)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human shouting, screaming, or other alerting cues</li> <li>Human footsteps or movements</li> <li>Gas leaks (hissing sounds)</li> <li>Gunshots</li> <li>Flowing water</li> <li>Thunder</li> <li>Announcements and bystander conversations</li> <li>Sirens, alarms or other auditory warning sounds</li> <li>Incoming vehicles</li> <li>Animal alert cues (e.g., barking dog)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gas (especially if in a closed or confined space)</li> <li>Smoke</li> <li>Chemicals</li> <li>Gasoline (after traffic collisions)</li> <li>Any non-familiar smell that seems suspicious</li> </ul>

## Safety risks: the person or bystanders

### Identify the danger that the ill or injured person or bystanders could pose.

Acknowledge that most first aid emergencies will involve helping someone the first aid provider knows (family, friends, colleagues) as that is who they spend the most time with. The following points can be considered with that in mind, and also the possibility of helping a stranger.

The ill or injured person or bystanders may be a risk to the first aid provider if they:

- are emotionally affected by the situation
- are under the influence of alcohol or drugs and behaving unpredictably
- have a mental health disorder that may influence how they experience and react to situations
- believe the first aid provider is not going to act in their best interest
- are unable to communicate due to language differences or sensory disabilities
- are carrying a blood-borne, contact-borne or air-borne virus
- are armed with a weapon.

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Be aware that stressful situations may make it harder for everyone (including the first aid provider) to communicate.

## Actions to take

### Identify the actions to make it safe to help.

For example:

- Access professional help such as the police or fire service.
- Use strategies that lower the risk of cross-infection like wearing gloves (including improvised strategies like a plastic bag).
- Manage simple dangers to make them safe. E.g., extinguish a small fire.
- Ask bystanders to support with hazards, threats or communication difficulties.
- Verbally coach the ill or injured person to help themselves.
- Move the ill or injured person to a safer place.

Emphasise that the most important thing to do is maintain safety. If a scene is not safe, then they should not enter it.

## Other observations

Explain that other than dangers to safety and how to overcome those, two other observations should be made during a scene assessment.

- a. Identify the potential cause of illness or injury as this can provide clues as to the characteristics and severity of the person's condition.
- b. Identify the number of ill or injured people as you may need to give this information to the EMS or local equivalent.

## Facilitation tip

### Create relevant role-play scenarios that allow learners to put all the elements of scene assessment into practice:

- Identify any dangers to themselves.
- Manage the danger.
- Identify the potential causes of illness or injury.
- Identify the number of ill or injured people.

Remember learners when creating scenarios, making them relevant and realistic. Aim to build confidence.