



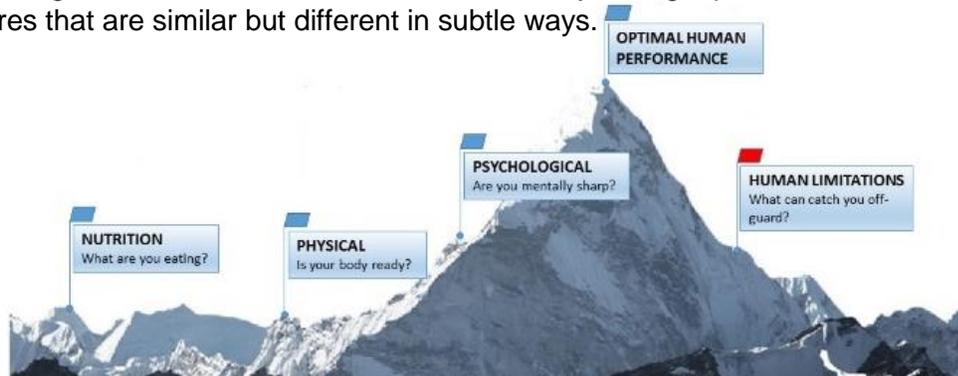
## Day 6 Human Limitations

Week of Remembrance June 30-July 6

Understanding our operational environment is critical to effective decision making that leads to safe mission accomplishment. Situation awareness is an ongoing process of gathering information by observation and communication with others. This process must be ongoing because our environment is constantly changing. Every second our brains are bombarded with about 11 million bits of information yet it can only process about 40. Understanding this human limitation means we must make the most out of every observation and ensure we communicate what we are seeing with those around us.

While our situation awareness can never be perfect we can train ourselves to be better observers of our environment and communicators of our observations.

- **Beware of attention traps** – When was the last time you picked your head up and looked around? Have you been focused on the task at hand? Ask yourself what changes you might have missed? Take 5 at 1400! Make this part of your day.
- **Train your mind and body every day** – Simple exercises can help you develop your observation skills. An example of this is called a **Keep In Mind (KIM)** game. Study the compartment to the right for 60 seconds then turn this over and try to write down as many of the items in the picture as possible. How did you do? Before your next PT session open up a compartment on the engine or crew buggy. Look at the contents for 60 seconds and try to remember as many of the individual items as possible (no you can't take a picture with your phone) in as much detail as possible. After PT write down as many of the items as you can remember. Once you get good at that you can make it harder by removing an item that should have been in the compartment and seeing if your fellow crewmembers notice what's missing.
- **Communicate like a master** – Communication is like any other skill...it requires practice! Gather a collection of 5 pictures of wildland fires. Have one crewmember choose and study one for 60 seconds without the rest of the crew looking. Their task is to then go into another room and via radio describe the picture in enough detail for the rest of the crew to identify the right picture. Make it harder by choosing pictures that are similar but different in subtle ways.



The topics for the NWCG "Wildland Firefighter Week of Remembrance" have been drawn from the Human Performance Optimization course taught as a part of the USFS Apprentice Academy in cooperation with the Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) and is rooted in the desire to prepare wildland fire personnel to optimally manage themselves and others at any given time. Review and resources have been contributed by the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, NIFC External Affairs, the Wildland Fire annual refresher group, and the Wildland Fire Leadership Subcommittee.