



Community spotlight

Leading with empathy during the Australia wildfires

CONTRIBUTORS:

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For more than 240 days, wildfires swept across Australia — wiping out nearly everything in their path. Efforts to support the community are well underway, but residents are still mourning the loss of family members, friends, homes, businesses and wildlife. The devastating fires claimed the lives of more than 35 people and destroyed nearly 3,000 homes. Millions of acres were scorched, impacting an estimated one billion animals that either died or suffered from the loss of their habitats and natural food sources.

In the midst of this crisis, we were incredibly moved by the level of compassion and bravery shown by the community. Sedgwick was working alongside firefighters, first responders and animal rescue teams in challenging conditions, including road closures, difficult terrain, limited mobile communication and extreme weather. During situations like this, it's up to our colleagues to lead with empathy.

CALLED TO SERVE

Inspired by the community's commitment and hard work, many of our colleagues felt compelled to provide support beyond the claims component. Sedgwick's national head of property and national executive adjuster, Brett Hanlon, is just one colleague who went above and beyond. Having done claims for more than 30 years, Brett is no stranger to catastrophes. But he wasn't prepared for what he witnessed during his initial assignment on Kangaroo Island. The national park that took up the western third of the island was decimated. "There was nothing left but burnt tree trunks and some wildlife," Brett recalls. "It really got to me."

Kangaroo Island used to be home to nearly 60,000 koalas. Today, there's an estimated 5,000 left on the island. This loss was devastating for the community, as Kangaroo Island was the only place in Australia that didn't have widespread disease among the koala population.

In the midst of surveying and documenting the damage, Brett witnessed an overwhelming number of defenseless wildlife seeking refuge and food in evacuated areas. "Animals were so desperate for water that they jumped into in-ground water tanks that were nine feet deep. We couldn't bear to just leave them there, so we climbed in to reach them."


Brett saw this unfortunate circumstance as an opportunity to meet additional needs in a moment's notice. So to prepare for his next visit, Brett packed fruit and a collapsible water bowl to help animals he came across while on-site. He explains, "In this field, we are much more than assessors. We aren't onsite to just ask questions, take photos and walk away. I always ask myself how I would feel in this situation if someone came representing an insurance company to interview me when I can't even process what the person is saying. It's our job to give empathy and reassurance, and when we can, fulfill other needs along the way."

THANK YOU FOR VISITING



AUSTIN AND SOUTH WEST





**WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT
ASIDE FROM OUR PROCESSES AND
SYSTEMS, WE'RE DEALING WITH
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HEARD AND FEEL SUPPORTED.**

DALE SWEENEY
SENIOR LOSS ADJUSTER AT SEDGWICK

DELIVERING PEACE OF MIND

Dale Sweeney, a senior loss adjuster at Sedgwick, is another colleague who embodies our belief that **caring counts**[®]. After completing a property inspection, he spotted a flare-up behind a local church that had potential to spread if it wasn't contained. Although his day had technically come to an end, he stayed onsite until the fire was extinguished. It didn't matter that it was late, or that he had emails to catch up on. Dale knew how invaluable it was to be present for the community and deliver peace of mind during this difficult time.

Dale explains, "Too often after a catastrophic event, the focus is on completing tasks to meet compliance, deadlines, etc. However, we need to remember that aside from our processes and systems, we're dealing with human beings who want to be heard and feel supported. They have come into our lives because something has gone wrong in theirs."

Over the next weeks and months, Dale and his team worked around the clock to document the damage and provide relief to those impacted by the wildfires. During this time, they encountered countless stories from people who had lost everything. "It doesn't change how we manage a claim, but it makes a difference to listen and let people know that they're more than a claim number. Simply put: I live life by some simple core values that fall directly in line with Sedgwick's."

CARING CONTINUES

Brett and Dale are just two Sedgwick colleagues who continue to bring the human connection to everything they do, each and every day. While the wildfires may have ended, we haven't forgotten about all the devastation. If you'd like to support and provide relief for those impacted, we invite you to join us in donating to the [Australian Red Cross](#). Together, we can continue to make a global impact and take care of those in need.