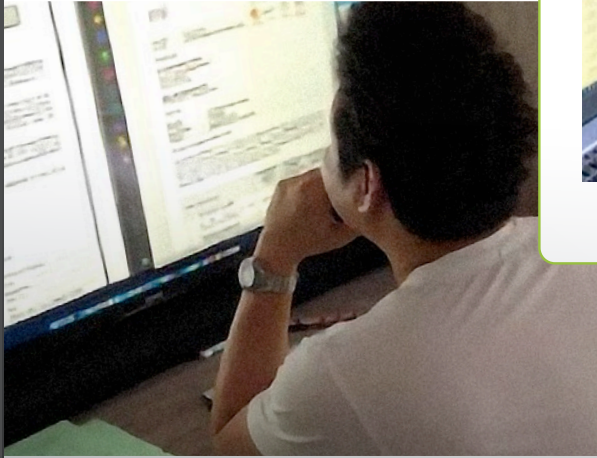
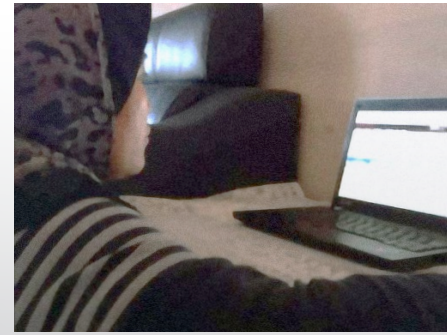


SINGAPORE



MALAYSIA



HONG KONG



TAIWAN

Sedgwick Asia

Our journey through the pandemic

BY **JAMES ONG**

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2020 has been a challenging year for everyone, whatever sector of the economy, wherever in the world they or their businesses are based. And the changes to working practice and everyday life have been seismic. Here in Asia, the impact of the pandemic can still be felt, and it remains to be seen how the 'new normal' will look across the coming weeks, months and even years. Indeed, the pandemic has changed the way we live, work and play.

REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

The initial outbreak in Asia began in Wuhan, China in late December 2019 and rapidly spread to neighboring Hong Kong and Taiwan. By February 2020, countries across Asia were seeing heightened outbreaks of the COVID-19 cases. Most governments in Asia began to implement partial travel bans and started closing their borders in March 2020; India was one of the first countries to close its borders to all short-term visitors, followed in quick succession by Taiwan, the Philippines and Malaysia. By the end of the month, Vietnam, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Laos, Brunei and Myanmar had also closed off their borders to short-term visitors.

Today, nearly a year after the initial outbreak, the borders of many Asian countries are still closed. Global and regional travel have come to a standstill. The travel and hospitality industries have been devastated by this pandemic.

Starting with China, which locked down all of Wuhan and partial areas across the country, most authorities across Asia imposed some form of social distancing measures — banning mass gatherings, closing schools, wearing masks and asking people to work from home.

Malaysia was the first country to impose widespread movement control order restrictions for the entire population in late March, and Singapore implemented similar “circuit breaker” measures a few weeks later.

Governments across Asia implemented various forms of contact tracing to trace and isolate affected persons, including web-based QR entry registrations and dedicated contact tracing apps. These efforts helped to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus by contact tracing anyone who had come in close contact with an infected person.

To assist their citizens, businesses and economy through the difficulties that came with periods of lockdown,

some governments in Asia offered financial wage subsidies aimed at keeping people in their jobs; in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia this support was the lifeline of many small-to medium-scale businesses that had been battered by the slowdown caused by the pandemic. Sedgwick Asia also participated in some of these subsidies, which helped keep our operations running with little to no business interruption throughout the pandemic.

TRANSITIONING TO A NEW NORMAL

Well before the declaration of the global pandemic in March, Sedgwick Asia had implemented business continuity planning, which we carried forward into various work-from-home (WFH) scenarios. We collaborated closely with the U.K. WFH team to ensure our policies and procedures met the Sedgwick standard. Sedgwick Asia was amongst the first Sedgwick operations in the world to start and successfully implement WFH — at the height of the pandemic approximately 70% of our 700 colleagues were in various WFH arrangements.



At the height of the pandemic, approximately 70% of our 700 colleagues were in various work-from-home arrangements.

Sedgwick Asia operates across nine countries: China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Throughout the pandemic and to date, we adopted various safety measures such as safe social distancing at the workplace and safe hygiene practices (e.g., using personal protection equipment (PPE), face masks, gloves and hand sanitizers) for all colleagues at work in the office and when undertaking loss investigations or surveys onsite.

These efforts, along with a seamless transition to working from home wherever possible, were critical to us in order to ensure our colleagues were able to work securely while still delivering the same world-class claims services our clients expect and deserve. Thankfully there were only a few obstacles — like when the laptops for our Indonesia team were stuck in customs for nearly two months! Across the organization, advanced technology enabled secure VPN access to our company network; we also began using WebEx video teleconference software to maintain frequent

and continuous collaboration between our colleagues and our clients.

A key element of our WFH strategy was to use digital tools to enable our expert loss adjusters to view sites when they were physically unable to visit them. While the restrictions on attendance were primarily governed by the lockdown, along with quarantine measures in place across the region, we now know our new remote approach to loss adjusting can be used when and where a lack of access to a site could delay assessment.



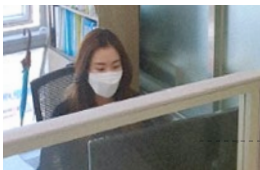
Using digital tools, our WFH strategy enables loss adjusters to view sites they can't physically visit.

GREEN SHOOTS

To quote Singapore's prime minister, "COVID-19 is this generation's challenge." As Asia begins to recover and revive from this pandemic, we will continue to learn and adapt and grow to meet the needs of our clients in this new normal. There are signs that Asia's economies are gradually recovering from the effects of the pandemic, although full recovery, based on predictions of many experts, is not expected for some years to come.

In China, life has all but returned to normal. Hong Kong experienced a second wave of infections recently but has now recovered. Korea also managed to overcome a second wave of infections and in Singapore, the daily community spread numbers have trickled down to nearly none. There is optimism across Asia that we have seen the worst and better days are to come. Against this backdrop, Sedgwick Asia has been transitioning throughout the pandemic — writing and rewriting our own story.

At Sedgwick Asia, we are adapting to new ways of working that ensure our colleagues are protected.



SOUTH KOREA



JAPAN



HONG KONG