

Loss Adjusting in Marine Insurance



Mr Nehemiah Neo, Managing Director and Founding Partner, Insight Group, Singapore, looks at how technology and telecommunications have today transformed the role of the adjuster and surveyor in Asia in the maritime sector.

Underwriters in London, Paris, New York or any other city can now contact an experienced claims adjuster in the Asia-Pacific region in a matter of seconds.

It means that as an adjuster, our job is made easier – technology and communications do assist the role of the adjuster. But it also lays even more emphasis on the service levels that we can provide.

It has also produced a situation in which our work for underwriters has become much more transparent – something we, at Insight, have always supported.

Communication between the major marine underwriting centres in Europe and the Asia Pacific has undoubtedly improved in the past decade.

But differences of opinion and perspective also get magnified to a greater extent, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the recent controversy over Additional Premium War Risk Rates which the Lloyd's – London Market Joint War Committee (JWC) decided to charge shipowners whose vessels were transiting the Straits of Malacca.

This decision was widely challenged by owners and governments in Southeast Asia.

But the positive thing was that Asian shipowners and the three littoral states bordering the Straits were able to make their views heard clearly and speedily in London.

The JWC recently agreed to remove the Straits from its list of War Risk – Additional Premium zones.

It was a move widely applauded by shipowners and shipping associations in the region.

We, at Insight, as Lloyd's Agents both in Singapore and Malaysia, welcome the JWC decision and believe the move has heralded the start of a closer era of communication between London marine underwriters and the shipowners and wider maritime community in Southeast Asia.

We welcome the decision because, as adjusters engaged in a wide variety of marine work, we appreciate the importance of free trade to our region.

After a few years of economic downturn, seaborne trade around Asia and in Southeast Asia, in particular, is gathering momentum at a fast pace. It increases across all sectors of the shipping market – from dry bulk, through to container vessels, oil tankers and specialist tonnage.

The Insight Advantage

Today, Insight's role as a partner to the maritime and marine insurance sectors in this region extends across a wide portfolio.

That is because we can match the speed of delivery of our service with the right level of quality and experience. These are values which the leading marine underwriters appreciate and that is why our marine portfolio is growing.

As Lloyd's Agents in Singapore and Malaysia, and as an expanding group with a strong presence in those countries as well as Indonesia, the Philippines, China and now the Middle East, we are engaged in increasing ship valuation work. This is partly due to the fact that the requirement for vessels in this region continues to be strong.

We have especially seen growth in our maritime business in China where Insight now has offices in Shanghai, Shenyang and Guangzhou.

We, as a group, certainly see China as a significant market for our marine expertise in future. We have two Singaporean qualified adjusters and surveyors helming our China operations with the clear mission of making a difference in China by providing service based on best practice and integrity and honesty. Mr Jeffrey Neo, our China Operation Head, makes history as the first foreigner to have been approved by the China Insurance Regulatory Commission to be both the Legal Person and the General Manager of a China adjusting practice as we understand it and Insight are expected to help contribute to the professionalism of the market.

In addition, Insight Marine Services, which is headed by Capt Baharudin Ishak, a qualified Master Mariner, is also engaged in a growing volume of specialised cargo surveys on behalf of underwriters.

We are seeing a return to high levels of infrastructure building activity right across the region and this entails much greater use of Project Cargo shipments.

Some of our most consistent work in recent times has been Pre Risk Loading Surveys which is strongly allied to our growing portfolio of marine loss prevention work.

More than ever, due to the speed of decision making and the need to assess risk speedily and accurately, underwriters have called upon us to advise on vessel stability and related issues.

Underwriters use Insight because we have an established team of surveyors, led by Master Mariners and Marine Engineers, who have a long track record of experience in the most complex of cases over a number of years.

Insight acts also as the Asia Pacific Office for vrs universe adjusters' network, handling and co-ordinating an increasing volume of cargo and hull and machinery surveys and adjustment work for its partners in the US and Europe.

As the insured value of cargoes increases and the sheer volume of cargo also goes up, underwriters see the need for trustworthy, competent and honest adjusters and surveyors and there is a limited number of those in our profession in Asia.

