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"Hurricane Charlie"

On the 23/06/1985, Air India Flight 182 en-route to Delhi and Bombay via London from Montreal Canada, exploded at an altitude of 31,000 feet (9,400 m) and crashed into the Atlantic Ocean, South of Ireland. The Boeing 747 - 237B was in Irish airspace at the time. It is hard to believe that was twenty five years ago.

It is estimated that "Hurricane Charlie" which formed on the 13/08/1986 along the Florida panhandle, was the costliest tropical cyclone of the 1986 Atlantic hurricane season. The highest wind speeds recorded were 130km/h and the lowest pressure was 987 mbar. Some 110,000 people were left without power in South Eastern Virginia in the USA and a total of 16 people were killed. Hurricane Charlie caused an estimated USD $20 million of damage throughout the United States. It tracked across the North Atlantic and gradually weakened into an extra tropical storm.

On the 25/08/1986, twelve days after it formed, "Hurricane Charlie" struck the Southeast and East Coasts of Ireland. It is estimated that rainfall peaked at over 280mm that day setting new records and causing widespread flooding when the Dargle and Dodder rivers overflowed. Wind speeds in excess of 105 km/h helped generate waves in excess of 30 feet. Research reveals that over 450 buildings were flooded, some to a depth of 8 feet. Hurricane Charlie is estimated to have cost the Irish Insurance Market in excess of €25 million. Five people lost their lives, four from drowning. The storm eventually dissipated on the 30/08/1986 near Denmark though not before it had caused significant damage in the UK.

This was almost twenty four years ago. This was probably the first taste of a severe weather related catastrophe in Ireland experienced by the loss adjusting profession and it put enormous pressure on resources. However the industry responded with adjusting and support personnel working seven days a week over the following sixteen to twenty weeks in order to ensure that all genuine claimants had their damaged properties inspected, repair costs agreed and claims concluded as quickly as humanly possible.

In addition these were the days of long format reports and electric golf ball typewriters. Word Processors, facsimile machines and mobile phones had not yet arrived on the scene although their introduction was just around the corner. We genuinely thought this was a one off event. It would never happen again. There was little discussion at that time about "Global Warming". Little did we know it would prove to be a forerunner of similar weather related events in the future.
2009-2010 Claims’ Cost
Twenty five years after "Hurricane Charlie" in December 2009/January 2010 the insurance industry was faced with unprecedented and sustained freezing weather conditions which set new records and produced a burst pipes catastrophe of quite incredible proportions. It is estimated that in the first three weeks of January 2010, in excess of 30,000 individual property and related claims were lodged with the insurance industry, with a potential cost to insurers/underwriters in excess of €250 million. This followed closely on the heels of the flood catastrophe in November 2009 which it is estimated will cost insurers €245 million and again produced very significant claim volumes. Once again the loss adjusting profession responded to both these events with personnel working round the clock to ensure affected policyholders received professional advice and fair compensation for the damage and loss to their properties and businesses.

Claims Specialists – Loss Adjusters
What are Loss Adjusters and how has the business changed in the last twenty five years? At times it can seem that adjusting and insurance are almost mutually exclusive occupations where adjusters depend on claims work, whilst insurers hope that losses will not occur! However the two have survived together since loss adjusting developed in the mid to late 1940s after the end of Second World War and now work very much hand in glove to deliver a first class professional insurance claims service across many fields of expertise.

Loss Adjusters are independent claims specialists engaged to investigate, manage, negotiate and agree the conclusion of property, casualty and other insurance related claims on behalf of insurers and policyholders. As part of that brief they will ensure the loss or damage falls within the terms of the insurance policy, the sums insured or limits of indemnity on the policy are adequate, the amounts being claimed are fair and reasonable and finally that all valid items of claim have been included and nothing omitted. The parties involved in the claims process can rely on the expertise and impartiality of the loss adjuster. Although the insurer usually pays the professional fees of the loss adjuster in respect of the various services rendered in connection with the adjustment of any given claim this is not to be viewed as interfering with the impartiality of the appointed adjuster. These guiding principles have not changed in the last twenty five years. However the methods and tools used by loss adjusters to achieve these stated goals have developed with the business over this same time period.

Developments since 1985
In 1985 there were some 15 independent loss adjusting practices operating within the Irish Insurance Market. The size and breadth of these firms varied and included the likes of Arnold & Green, Aston & Associates, Farrell & Associates, Scully Tyrrell & Co, Thornton & Partners, McLarens and Thomas Howell Self to name but a few. Some firms operated exclusively as either property or casualty adjusters though a number maintained multi-disciplinary units. Most firms serviced the local insurance market whilst a small number of practices protected the interests of the UK/Lloyds Markets.

The position remained fairly static over the following ten years with just a handful of new entrants and little change to the methodology. However, rapid consolidation in the general insurance market in the early to mid 90s coupled with growth in centralised procurement acted as drivers of significant change within the loss adjusting industry in Ireland. Some of these changes reflected developments that had already taken place within the UK market. Initially we witnessed significant process change linked to developments in technology and innovative work practices. Formal central procurement of service provider contracts emerged with loss adjusting firms operating to strict Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and under Delegated Authority. The introduction of Delegated
Authority, which was based on the UK model, resulted in significant cost savings for insurers. Initially the Irish Revenue Commissioners were unwilling to accept the legal status of loss adjusters acting under a contractual Delegated Authority Agreement. However following a challenge financed by the Miller Farrell Group (now OSG Group), the Revenue Commissioners eventually conceded the legal position and the rest as they say is history.

It was inevitable that with the changes described above coupled with the ever increasing demands of regulation, compliance and corporate governance, consolidation would follow in the loss adjusting industry...and it did! Mergers and acquisitions followed. Scully Tyrrell & Co became Robins Scully Tyrrell and thereafter GAB Robins Scully Tyrrell, GAB Robins and finally recently, Cunningham Lyndsey, following the acquisition of the wider International Division of GAB Robins by Cunningham Lyndsey.


Thornton & Partners remains the oldest established loss adjusting practice and remains a very significant player in the Irish market.


Consolidation has resulted in the development by 2010 of three large multi-disciplinary loss adjusting practices operating in Ireland namely Cunningham Lyndsey, OSG Outsource Services Group Ltd and Thornton & Partners. Smaller niche players continue to actively participate in the market place providing quality services to their clients. Although it is difficult to determine the exact numbers employed in loss adjusting in Ireland twenty five years ago, research suggests it was in the very low hundreds, perhaps not greater than 250 including support personnel. However by 2010 the numbers employed directly in the business easily exceed 800, providing exceptional professional expertise and service to the insurance and wider related financial services market. Loss Adjusting Practices will continue to take advantage of increased market demand for wider managed services, assistance based claims solutions and knowledge process outsourcing. This will be attained through a combination of security, integrity, quality, trust, professionalism and innovation. Regulation will continue to impact on the business but should be embraced as a positive tool to help drive the business forward into the future at the same time maintaining the pre-eminent position of the profession in the eyes of insurers we serve and the public.

The loss adjusting profession in Ireland has always considered affiliation with the Insurance Institute to be a fundamental part of our educational and training infrastructure. The achievement of minimum competency (CIP) and the Diploma in Loss Adjusting is a prerequisite for the achievement of Chartered status through the Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters.