

4. Roads and Road Traffic.—Long-distance private-car traffic virtually disappeared from the roads early in 1942, while long-distance truck-, bus-, and service-car traffic fell away heavily towards the end of the year. Private-car traffic is now confined largely to the towns and the immediately surrounding districts where the truck and bus traffic has also been reduced in volume. Road-maintenance is now confined almost entirely to repairs due to climatic conditions and to surface repairs on a few roads where heavy vehicle traffic has increased sharply for a short time.

5. Only a few very minor alterations have taken place during the year in respect of limitations of loads on roads. These relate in the main to roads not hitherto classified.

6. Road Accidents.—The following summary classifies the persons killed and injured during the last three years :—

	Killed.			Injured.		
	1940.	1941.	1942.	1940.	1941.	1942.
Occupants of motor-vehicles	86	76	75	2,095	1,820	1,197
Motor-cyclists and pillion-riders	26	21	26	479	397	221
Bicyclists	30	25	22	872	726	477
Pedestrians	59	53	44	724	612	492
Total	201	175	167	4,170	3,555	2,387

It is considered that the substantial decline in road accidents in 1942 is due rather to a reduction in the volume of traffic resulting from the petrol-restrictions than to an increase in relative road safety. There is reason to believe that many accidents are due to motorists and pedestrians relaxing their usual standards of care in the belief that as there is less traffic there is now not the same need to be careful.

7. Enforcement of Traffic Laws.—Complete figures relating to traffic offences for the year ended 31st March, 1943, are not yet available, but the figures for the nine months ended December, 1942, indicate that there were fewer prosecutions, more warnings, and generally fewer serious traffic offences in 1942. Offences reported totalled 2,987 for the nine months, as against 3,680 for 1941; prosecutions and convictions showed 1,717 and 1,633 respectively, compared with 2,615 and 2,475 respectively for the calendar year 1941.

8. Commercial Tires.—The outstanding factor in the road-transport industry during the period under review was the tire-shortage resulting from the loss of Malaya, which produced over 90 per cent. of the world's supply of raw rubber. Action to meet the situation was taken straight away throughout the Allied Nations by the rapid development of plants for the production of synthetic rubber and drastic measures for the conservation of existing tires.

9. New Zealand's national economy is largely geared on motor transport, the collapse of which would call forth the utmost ingenuity and resource to prevent repercussions of a nature that are many times more serious than is generally realized. In the field of national production it is estimated that approximately one-third of the volume is directly dependent on motor transport.

10. The steps taken up to the present to meet the tire situation are—

- The diversion of all possible freight and passenger traffic from road transport to the railways and coastal shipping;
- The co-ordination of all classes of truck operation with the object of eliminating empty running and increasing, within the capacity of the tires, the loading of individual vehicles;
- The provision of a national speed-limit of 40 miles per hour and the strict enforcement of existing speed-limits for heavy vehicles;
- The provision of load-limits based on the carrying-capacity of the tires on any vehicle;
- The reorganization of bus services involving an overall reduction of 25 per cent. in bus-mileage, including a 75-per-cent. reduction in Sunday services;
- The elimination of contract passenger services which provided transport for picnics, sports gatherings, race meetings, &c.;
- Restrictions on the cartage of live-stock in cases where it can be driven;
- The zoning of cream-collection deliveries;
- The zoning of delivery services operated in connection with the delivery of the following commodities: Drapery, dry cleaning, milk, meat, bread, coal and firewood, and groceries.

11. Goods Transport Control Committees.—Under the Transport Control Emergency Regulations 1942, Committees comprising representatives from the carriers, the Railways Department, the farmers, the meat-exporting interests, and stock and station agents (the last three named acting only when the transport of stock is being considered) were set up, their functions being—

- To receive orders for the carriage within their respective districts of goods or stock by motor-vehicles; and
- To allocate such orders among available carriers, having regard to the necessity of conserving motor-vehicles and supplies of petrol and tires and the desirability of making a fair and equitable allocation among the available carriers.

12. These Committees were decided upon in order that the practical knowledge and experience of those engaged in operating road transport might be brought to bear on meeting a serious and urgent position. Service is voluntary, and the Committees have done good work. There is a right of appeal against their decisions to the District Transport Licensing Authorities, but, considering the numerous decisions that have been given by the Committees, there have been surprisingly few appeals. In general, the Committees aim at organizing the fulfilling of the demand for road transport so that empty running is reduced to the barest possible minimum.