

Comparative fire statistics are as follows :—

Year.	Fires in State Forests.		Other Fires.*		Sawmills Destroyed.
	Number.	Area Affected.	Number.	Area Affected.	
		Acres.		Acres.	
1944-45	17	1,990	52	3,920	2
1945-46	62	16,330	311	574,000	9
1946-47	44	1,700	88	2,700	5
1947-48	48	4,200	127	24,800	6
1948-49	32	500	40	2,020	3

* Fires within ten miles of a State forest boundary.

3. *Fire Detection and Control.*—Weather conditions were exceptionally favourable in most districts during the fire season ; well-distributed rains kept the vegetation, which normally dries out towards mid-summer, green to some extent until the autumn freshening of growth. Canterbury was an exception to this, dry and very hot weather with low humidities setting in early in January and continuing with brief respites almost until the end of the fire season. In the central North Island districts there was a short spell of hazardous conditions late in December and again in February.

The number of fires in State forests was the lowest for a number of years ; only one fire occurred in exotic forests, and the damage from this was held to the loss of less than half an acre. This fire started in the centre of the forest while a high and dry wind was blowing, and had it not been for the quickness and efficiency of the fire organization in the forest, serious loss might have resulted.

The assistance given by the Weather Office in providing special forecasts, and the National Broadcasting Service in broadcasting warnings, has again been most helpful. Aerial fire patrols from the Rotorua Airfield were carried out as in previous years ; these patrols, apart from their direct purpose in observing and reporting on fires, are proving a valuable adjunct to our publicity measures in furthering the development of fire consciousness amongst the general public. The aircraft (Austers) now used for the work, with their greater range, better visibility, and comfort for crews, are giving an improved service. The willing assistance and co-operation of the Air Department and Air Force personnel are again gratefully acknowledged. Aerial patrols for other districts were unnecessary this season.

Fire-fighting equipment acquired during the year included 27 locally-built trailers to carry the power-driven pumps mentioned in last year's report, and the necessary accessories, which include 1,060 ft. of 1½ in. hose in three pack-sacks. The trailers are fitted with a standard ball hitch suitable for towing by any vehicle in the Service. The convenience of these pumps for manual transport in rough country, and the ease with which the hose can be run out, make them extremely valuable units of fire-fighting equipment under suitable conditions.

A 100 ft. lookout tower with quarters for a married man was erected at the Eyrewell Forest. Six-bay depots for mechanized fire equipment were erected at the Ashley, Balmoral, Hanmer, and Eyrewell Forests ; and a lookout for the Tapanui group of forests has been practically completed.

4. *Communications.*—New telephone-lines erected comprised 7 miles of earthing-working circuit and 9 miles of metallic circuit ; and 7 miles of earthing-working circuit were renewed. The total length of lines is now 536 miles, of which 213 miles are of metallic circuit. A total of 282 fixed instruments is installed ; and 14 portable telephones were purchased during the year, bringing the total to 84.