

WHANGAREI.

SIR,—

Office of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 8th June, 1909.

In reply to your letter dated the 29th ultimo, addressed to the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs, asking for copies of Inspector Hugo's reports relating to his inspections of your brigade, I have the honour to forward you a report in connection with matters therewith.

At 8.5 p.m. on the 26th May, at the brigade station, I gave a call for a supposed fire at a spot some 130 yards distant, directing the Superintendent to get two deliveries to work. The first water was shown at 8.6.26 p.m., or 1 minute 26 seconds from the time of call. The second water was shown at 8.6.32 p.m., or 6 seconds later. This result was distinctly good. Some further drill was carried out, and at the station various matters relating to fire-work and fire-extinction was gone into.

Personnel of the Brigade.

At the muster of the brigade there was present the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and twelve firemen; absent, one on leave and one sick. This accounts for the full strength—viz., sixteen all told. The numerical strength is on the weak side, and three or four volunteer probationers should be enrolled, so that they would be competent to assist in the event of a fire of any magnitude. The present members of the brigade are a smart, active body of men, of good physique, who appear to take considerable interest in their work.

Stations.

The central station is well situated with respect to the risks of the town, and the accommodation is sufficient for present requirements. The two hose-reel sheds are well placed, and should be of great benefit.

Water Pressure and Reticulation.

The average pressure—about 110 lb.—is a very good one for your fire-extinction purposes. The reticulation is fair, but extensions are required, and these, I believe, are being carried out gradually. Certain of the fire-hydrants are without indicators, and this matter should receive immediate attention.

Plant and Equipment.

The plant is maintained in good order, but the supply of working hose (1,600 ft.) is not sufficient, and a further supply should be obtained. Coupling-ladders are required—say, three, 11 ft. 6 in. each; that would be 30 ft. when extended. These two matters should be attended to.

General, and for Consideration.

Seeing that your town covers such a large area (over 2,000 acres), some other method than that at present in vogue for conveying the plant to a fire should be adopted. When men have to run any distance, dragging the plant with them, they can be of very little service for the first few minutes after arriving at the scene of action—just at the time when all their energies are required; therefore, either a horse or motor should be available (reliable second-hand chassis by well-known makers can now be purchased at very reasonable cost); also, a fire-alarm system, connected up so that when the box is operated upon it would ring the large fire-bell at the station, should be installed. I do not suggest that this should be done out of revenue, or that the annual estimates be unduly swelled, but that a sum of money should be borrowed for the purpose. A sufficient amount to carry out these proposals could be borrowed, which, with interest and sinking fund combined, would amount to little more than an annual charge of about £50.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

C. J. Eccles, Esq., Secretary, Whangarei Fire Board, Whangarei.

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