

Four new circuits and forty-eight new call-boxes have been added to the street fire-alarm installations—viz., Auckland, three circuits and thirty-three call-boxes; Christchurch, fourteen call-boxes; Timaru, one circuit and one call-box. One more automatic fire-detector system has been installed in Christchurch, and one in Dunedin.

Compared with the estimates for 1914-15, although one more fire district is included, there is a decrease of £1,031 in the total amount of estimated expenditure for the coming year.

The total number of calls received by the brigades throughout the various fire districts was 864, as against 777 for the previous year, an increase of 87. As compared with 1913-14, there has been a decrease of 8 in the number of out-of-district calls, but an increase under all other headings viz., chimney fires, 86 (70), increase 16; bush and rubbish fires, 93 (48), increase 45; false alarms, 165 (160), increase 5; actual fires, 484 (455), increase 29. Of the 484 fires 12 are reported as due to incendiarism, 22 as having occurred on unoccupied premises, with a large increase in the number of those returned as of unknown origin—211 as against 144, an increase of 67. Again, as in previous years, analysis of the reports show a number of instances of over or excessive insurance.

Losses throughout the Fire Districts.—The two heaviest district losses occurred in Dunedin, £30,500, and Gisborne, £18,385; the total loss for the twelve months ending the 30th June amounting to £120,057, and comparing with the previous years as follows:—

	Insured. £	Uninsured. £	Total. £
1913-14	70,522	13,845	84,367
1914-15	100,534	19,523	120,057
Increase	30,012	5,678	35,690

Losses throughout the Dominion.—The insured loss throughout the Dominion for the year ended the 31st December, 1914 (probably underestimated), was £468,506, and compares as follows:—

	£		£
Year ending 31/12/13 ..	484,462	Average 10 years ending 31/12/13	432,144
„ 31/12/14 ..	468,506	Loss year ending 31/12/14 ..	468,506
Decrease	15,956	Increase	36,362

Following the same line of deduction as adopted in previous years, and adding 33½ per cent. to the ascertained insured loss, so as to arrive at the approximate fire waste, the total loss for the year ended the 31st December, 1914, is thus shown to be £624,675, a decrease of £21,274 as compared with 1913, but an increase of £48,483 when compared with the average for the preceding ten years. It will be observed that the losses throughout the fire district and the losses throughout the Dominion, quoted above, are each for a term of twelve months, but ending at different periods of the year; and the insured loss for the simultaneous twelve months ending the 31st December, 1914, is—for the Dominion £468,506, and for the fire districts £71,593, or 15·36 per cent. of the total loss with the inhabitants of the fire districts, comprising something over 25 per cent. of the whole population of New Zealand.

Some portion of the increased loss shown under the heading of “Losses throughout the Fire Districts” must, of course, be set down as due to the greater number of fires that occurred, but a factor in the matter is the large number of both permanent and volunteer firemen that have enlisted in the Expeditionary Forces, and the fire-fighting efficiency, particularly of the country brigades, has suffered in consequence, more so in that a large majority of those enlisted consist of the more energetic and experienced firemen of their respective brigades.

Out of the total amount of the loss for the year, £38,969 has been incurred on dwellinghouse property, and, as is to be expected, the most serious individual losses have taken place in those cases where the property is more remotely situated from the fire-stations, or in those districts where the equipment of the brigade still leaves much to be desired; and when such local conditions exist it would be a common-sense precaution on the part of the householders, at any rate, in the better and more expensive class of dwellings, to purchase and place in the houses one of the many recognized and duly tested patterns of liquid chemical extintincteurs now on the market. The initial cost is not great, and the cost of maintenance at most only a matter of a couple of shillings a year. Then, with very little but requisite looking-after there is always at hand an instantaneous and effective means of extinguishing an incipient fire, or at the least keeping it in check until the arrival of the brigade, and that can be used effectively by any female or young person.

It is to be regretted that more has not been done during the year in the way of installing automatic fire-detectors in the larger warehouses, departmental stores, factories, &c., particularly so in view of the continual increase of practical evidence regarding the beneficial results obtained, and their great value as a factor in efficient fire-protection, as also seeing that the installation of any such system is entirely in the interest of the individual property-owner and at practically no additional cost, for in the majority of cases, at least, the amount of rebate on the insurance premiums will more than cover the interest on the capital cost of installation.

Appended are the following tables:—

1. Summary of calls attended by each brigade;
 2. Fire loss in each district;
 3. Annual cost of each brigade;
 4. Summary of the causes of fires in each district;
 5. Personnel and equipment of each brigade;
- Also detailed reports dealing with each fire district.

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