

In addition to the above, periodical inspections have been made of the military camps and their equipments, as also of the hospitals, forts, and other buildings under the jurisdiction of the Defence Department. Also, the work of Departmental Fire Inspector for the Dominion has been carried out to the extent that my other and more important duties have permitted.

In consequence of the serious position in regard to obtaining suitable fire-hose in the Dominion, in July, 1918, the Department, through the High Commissioner in London, on behalf of a number of the Fire Boards, accepted a collective tender for the supply of some 16,000 ft. of hose, but up to the present only 5,000 ft. of the total quantity has been received in Wellington.

The following casualties to civilians and firemen, due to fires, has been reported to Superintendents of Brigades as having occurred in their respective districts:—

Auckland.—2nd February, 1919: Fire in private dwelling—an elderly woman severely burned, and subsequently died in consequence. 19th February, 1919: Fire in hotel—one man suffocated and several others injured. 26th May, 1919: Fireman thrown off motor and injured whilst returning from a fire; ultimately recovered.

Christchurch.—4th February, 1919: Fire in private dwelling—the occupier taken to hospital suffering from severe shock; subsequently recovered.

Dunedin.—14th August, 1918: Fire in private dwelling—woman taken to hospital partially suffocated and in a serious condition; ultimately recovered. 8th November, 1918: Fire in private dwelling—a Chinaman found dead; death caused by suffocation. 26th May, 1919: Fire in three-storied boardinghouse—boarder injured through jumping from top-floor window; ultimately recovered.

Hamilton.—12th March, 1919: Two firemen injured through being thrown off motor fire-engine whilst returning from a fire; both recovered.

New Plymouth.—20th May, 1919: Whilst working at a fire one of the firemen was severely cut on hand.

Owing to the depleted and continually varying strength of the brigades, due to war exigencies, it is impossible to compile any accurate percentage of attendance of brigadesmen at calls to fires, therefore that computation has not been included in the present report.

The total number of calls received throughout the fire districts for 1918–19 was 876, as against 820 for 1917–18, an increase of 56, including an increase of 10 in the number of actual fires—viz., 416 (406); an increase of 32 in chimney fires—95 (63); an increase of 47 in bush and rubbish fires—105 (58); a decrease of 29 in false alarms—238 (267); and a decrease of 4 in out-of-district fires—22 (26).

Out of the 416 actual fires, 13 are reported as due to incendiarism, 11 as having occurred on unoccupied premises, and 152 as of unknown origin. A source of danger from fire, lately arisen as an outcome of modern developments, is the domestic flat-iron heated by electricity, several fires having been returned as being caused through leaving the current switched on when the iron is not actually in use.

Losses throughout the fire districts: The three heaviest district losses occurred in Auckland (£45,849), Christchurch (£27,433), and Waihi (£21,446). The total loss for the twelve months ending 30th June, 1919, amounted to £151,153, as compared with £245,806 for the twelve months ending 30th June, 1918, a decrease of £94,653.

The insured loss throughout the Dominion for the year ended 31st December, 1918, amounted to £462,540, and throughout the fire districts for the corresponding period the insured loss amounted to £67,895, or under 15 per cent. of the total loss.

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.

I have, &c.,

THOS. T. HUGO,

The Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

Inspector of Fire Brigades.