

Also, the following special visits were paid :—

- Petone—11th July and 9th December, 1921 : Testing of an auxiliary water-supply.
- Trentham Camp—14th October, 1921, and 9th February, 1922 : Inspection of camp and equipment.
- Featherston Camp—1st November, 1921 : Inspection of camp and equipment.
- Foxton—16th February, 1922 : Meeting in regard to formation of Fire Board.
- Rotorua—27th February, 1922 : King George V Hospital—inspection and report.
- Hanmer—24th March, 1922 : Queen Mary Hospital—inspection and report.
- Cashmere Hills—27th March, 1922 : Sanatorium—inspection and report.

Periodical inspections have been made of certain public institutions, and, as usual, advice has been given to local bodies and others in relation to fire-prevention, fire risks, water-supply ; specifications for and purchase of new plant and sketch-plans for new fire-stations and additions to existing buildings have been prepared.

With certain exceptions, the fire inspection of Government buildings has been taken over by the Public Works Department, and the Assistant Fire Inspector has been transferred to that Department.

During the year the Department has, on behalf of the various Fire Boards and of the United Fire Brigades Association, imported and distributed in accordance with the requisitions received 19,000 ft. of fire-hose.

The United Fire Brigades Association has adopted the internal-expansion pattern of coupling for use in New Zealand, and in accordance with that resolution the Department has had blue-prints of the couplings prepared and added to the series of working-drawings of the standpipes, branches, nozzles, &c., now adopted as the standard patterns in this Dominion.

Following are the principal improvements and additions to equipment :—

- Auckland—Erection and equipment of a hose-reel station to serve the Point Chevalier district.
- Christchurch—New 50-horse-power motor fitted with 300–400 g.p.m. turbine pump, first-aid pump, ladder, &c. ; section purchased for erection of a new fire-station in the suburbs.
- Dunedin—Extension of street fire-alarm system ; the 85 ft. electric extension ladder fitted with a new set of batteries.
- Wanganui—New central fire-station complete and in occupation ; street fire-alarm installation, having forty-nine call-points, completed and in commission.

Fatalities due to fires have been reported as follows :—

- Auckland—16th June, 1922 : Boardinghouse—elderly male boarder burned to death.
- Hamilton—3rd April, 1922 : Hotel—two male guests and a female employee burned to death.
- Rotorua—31st July, 1922 : Private dwelling—aged male occupant burned to death.

The estimates for the year ending 30th June, 1923, amount to a total of £74,754, as against £82,484 for last year, a decrease in the aggregate of £7,730.

The total number of calls received throughout the fire districts for 1921–22 was 1,119, as against 1,168 for 1920–21, a decrease of 49, made up under the several headings as follows : Fires, 531 (540)—decrease, 9 ; chimney fires, 173 (140)—increase, 41 ; bush and rubbish fires, 148 (226)—decrease, 78 ; out-of-district fires, 23 (36)—decrease, 13 ; false alarms, 244 (234)—increase, 10.

Of the 531 fires, 9 are reported as due to incendiarism, 11 as having occurred on unoccupied premises, and 176 as of unknown origin. Of the 531 fires, 213 occurred in dwellinghouses, 29 resulting in total loss, 28 were damaged to the extent of from 50 to 90 per cent. of their value, 27 damaged from 25 to 50 per cent., and in the remaining 129 cases the damage ranged from slight loss to 25 per cent. of their value.

The total fire loss throughout the fire districts for the year ended 30th June, 1922, amounted to £183,619, as against £394,704 for the previous year, a decrease of £211,085. The three heaviest district losses occurred in Auckland (£24,819), Hamilton (£23,530), and Dunedin (£18,442).

The insured loss throughout the Dominion for the year ended 31st December, 1921, amounted to £765,310. This exceeds by nearly £200,000 the loss for 1917 (£578,021), the heaviest annual loss of previous years. The proportion of the loss throughout the fire districts for the corresponding twelve months amounted to £253,887.

At a conservative estimate the fire waste for 1921 amounted to £900,000, or 14s. 9d. per head of population, which must be approaching a world record for individual fire loss in any country under normal conditions. The loss was widely distributed, for, although there were several rather severe warehouse fires, no conflagration or particularly disastrous fire occurred during the twelve months.

It is to be regretted that more of the business firms owning large warehouses or stores do not in their own interest recognize the value of and install in their premises one of the several reliable systems of automatic fire-alarms and sprinklers, which are universally recognized as most efficient safeguards, and provide a nearly certain immunity from heavy loss in the case of internal outbreaks of fire. A large rebate in premium is allowed by insurance companies in the case of buildings fitted with approved automatic alarms and sprinklers—to the extent that the amount of the rebate is in some cases sufficient to cover, or nearly cover, interest on the capital cost of the installation ; and in that view it would cause little or no hardship if the Government, in the common interest, and to reduce the drain on the national wealth caused by such heavy fire losses, were to make compulsory the installation of automatic safeguards in buildings of certain descriptions or over a certain size, as is now being done in other countries.