

A number of other casualties to firemen and civilians have been reported, but none of them of a very serious nature.

The returns show an increase in the number of calls under all headings except that of chimney-fires. The number of calls received throughout the fire district for 1925-26 totalled 1,785, as against 1,628 for 1924-25, an increase of 157. The 1,785 calls are made up under the different headings as follows: Fires, 898 (828); increase, 70. Chimney-fires, 231 (238); decrease, 7. Bush and rubbish fires, 320 (254); increase, 66. False alarms, 276 (257); increase, 19. Out-of-district fires, 60 (51); increase, 9.

Of the 898 fires, 42 are reported as due to incendiarism, 11 as having occurred on unoccupied premises, and 282 as of unknown origin. The principal causes as shown by the returns are—electricity, 75—of that number 15 are due to domestic irons being left with the current switched on; sparks from copper-fires and fireplaces, 65; smoking and cigarette-butts, 51; motors backfiring and short circuits, &c., 48; lighted matches thrown down, &c., 38.

The total fire loss throughout the fire districts for the twelve months ended 30th June, 1926, amounted to £352,638, as against £306,114 for the previous twelve months, an increase of £46,524. The four heaviest district losses occurred in Dunedin (£59,631), Christchurch (£35,913), Auckland (£26,613), and Greymouth (£25,227).

According to the census of March last the population of New Zealand totals 1,379,487, and of that number 480,365, or 34·8 per cent., are inhabitants of the fire districts. The insured fire loss throughout the whole of the Dominion for the twelve months ended 31st December, 1925, amounted to £840,735, and the proportionate loss in the forty fire districts for the corresponding twelve months was £212,796, or 8s. 10d. *per capita*; whilst the insured loss for the rest of the Dominion (*i.e.*, loss in fire districts deducted) amounted to £627,939, or 14s. *per capita*. The fire waste throughout the Dominion for the year 1925 is estimated at £1,050,919, or 15s. 3d. per head of population.

A serious aspect of the year's working is the large number (42) of fires returned as due to incendiarism. Serious also is the number (123) of fires under the heading of electric irons, matches, smoking, cigarette-butts, and live ashes, practically all due to sheer carelessness. There are presumably many more under the same headings, but fire having destroyed all trace of the cause they are hidden amongst the 282 fires returned as of "unknown" origin. Obviously the fault lies in a widely spread want of a sense of responsibility in such matters, to counteract which it is necessary to get in early, and the remedy is, first, as advocated years ago, adoption of the system in vogue in America, making instruction in fire-prevention matters, for one hour per month, compulsory in State colleges and schools. In this connection the United Fire Brigade Association in March, 1921, at their conference in Napier, passed a resolution asking Government to adopt a similar system in New Zealand. Secondly, to follow the example of other countries and inaugurate an annual "fire-prevention week"—indeed, this could well be carried out in conjunction with the "health week" already established in several of our towns.

The returns show that only eight new installations of automatic fire-alarms and automatic sprinklers have been installed during the year, and, to quote from previous reports, after all that has been preached and published throughout the Dominion in regard to the well-authenticated efficiency of certain sprinkler and automatic fire-alarm systems as safeguards against serious fire loss it is surprising that more owners of properties such as the larger emporiums, factories, mills, &c., do not install one or other of the systems on their premises. In addition to an almost complete immunity from serious fire loss the insurance companies allow a large rebate of premium where property is so protected. The installation of these automatic safeguards is a good, sound business proposition, and the sooner owners of large properties realize that fact and act accordingly the better it will be for themselves and others.

Appended are brief detailed reports dealing with each fire district, also 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.

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THOS. T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

The Hon. Minister of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

DETAILED REPORTS.

AUCKLAND.

Inspections, 27th and 28th May, 1926. The several fire-stations and their equipment were found in proper order, and the inspection was satisfactory throughout.

At a meeting of the Fire Board held on the 26th May certain recommendations were made in respect to the Headquarters Station.

During the year a 50 h.p. motor hose-tender fitted with a first-aid pumping outfit, 35 ft. extension ladder, &c., has been added to the brigade equipment; also a new substation of brick construction, to serve the Point Chevalier district, is in course of erection, and is now nearly ready for occupation.

There still remains the provision of married quarters at the Remuera District Station to be considered.