

Six hundred and fourteen of the accidents were caused by or were due to machinery: this is slightly under one-fourth of the total number of accidents that occurred, and is about the same proportion as in previous years. Of the thirteen fatal accidents nine were caused by or due to machinery. The other principal causes of accidents were found to be as follows: Faulty handling of tools, 742; handling of other objects (viz., objects dropped or tipped over, objects falling, or strain due to handling), 601; falls of persons from stairs, ladders, platforms, &c., 296; handling of poisonous, hot, and corrosive substances, 105; others (miscellaneous), 410; total, 2,768.

Disability caused: Temporary disability, 2,638; permanent partial disability, 117; fatalities, 13: total, 2,768.

Of the fatal and more serious accidents that occurred in factories the following particulars are given:—

1. While oiling the bearings of a lower shaft after the machinery was started a worker in a sawmill apparently lost his balance. In falling he came into contact with the friction-gear belting, and his neck was dislocated. The machinery was already adequately provided with safeguards.

2. A log fell on a timber-worker, causing his death a few days later.

3. A freezing-works employee apparently acted contrarily to instructions, with the result that the contents of a blood-digester poured over him, and he died later from shock and burns.

4. A worker engaged in testing a gravel-screening plant apparently slipped, and his right leg was caught in the machinery, with fatal results. The plant was on trial, and had not been passed by the Inspector of Machinery.

5. A sugar-worker stacking sugar was struck in the back, causing him to fall. Death occurred the following day. The man operating the hoist was unable to see the worker engaged on the stack. Precautions against further accidents of the kind are now taken by means of signalling.

6. A sawmill-worker endeavoured to saw too many boards in one operation. This caused the belting to grip the boards against the saw, which struck the worker in the groin, causing death. Additional safeguards to limit the number of boards, and also to prevent any board flying back and striking the worker, were devised by the Inspector of Machinery, and steps have been taken to have similar devices attached to swing-saws in other districts.

7. A brassmoulder's labourer received injuries to his eye through an explosion of metal. He developed meningitis, which caused his death. At the inquest and also the Department's inquiry no explanation could be obtained as to the cause of the explosion.

8. A boilermaker strained his heart while at work. Death occurred some months later.

9. A slaughterman unfamiliar with the lay-out of the plant at a freezing-works apparently leaned over a guard-rail to look through a hole in the wall in which a fan was being driven and was struck by the fan; he died shortly after. A wire guard has now been fixed round the fan.

10. A shift engineer in a pumping-station was found lying dead on the floor near the engine. It is presumed that he was in the act of coupling the pumps with the engine when the bar that he was using became entangled in the revolving machinery and swung around, striking him on the head.

11. A sawmill employee engaged as a "slabby" was hurled on to a circular saw through attempting to cut a log that was too long for the skids. Death occurred instantly. The saw had been recently installed, and had not been passed by the Inspector of Machinery before being operated, and no safeguards had been erected. Proceedings were taken by the Inspector of Machinery for using machinery for which a certificate had not been given, and a penalty was imposed.

12. A manager of a cheese-factory proceeded to turn the belt on the pulleys on a water-wheel. His body was later found under the wheel, and it is presumed that he slipped and fell into the race, where he was unable to extricate himself. A requisition was immediately served on the company to provide a grid alongside the wheel to prevent any person from being carried under it.

13. A butcher in a small-goods shop sustained a slight cut and the wound became septic. Although treated at hospital he succumbed to the injury.

FACTORY HYGIENE AND WELFARE WORK.

Continued attention has been given to this phase of the Department's activities, particularly in those factories and shops where women workers are employed; besides ventilation and sanitation, such matters as cloak-rooms, rest-rooms, washing facilities, adjustable chairs, and the covering of concrete floors are attended to.

Several instances are quoted by Inspectors of the satisfactory provision made in newly erected factory premises for the welfare of the workers employed. As an indication of the endeavour made by employers to provide not only good working-conditions but also to encourage social activities amongst the workers, an Auckland firm employs a welfare superintendent, a hot lunch is provided at a minimum cost, a special dining and social hall is set apart for the workers' use, and a library of good books is kept on the premises. It might also be mentioned that a Thrift Club has been opened, which has been joined by employees at fifty-four factories and workshops in Auckland; at the 31st March last the depositors numbered 1,673, with credit balances totalling £3,525.

As mentioned in previous reports, arrangements were made with a number of factory occupiers in the chief centres of the Dominion to keep returns showing the temperature and humidity of the air in the workrooms, together with other factors that are likely to affect the health and output of the workers. From these returns the Government Statistician obtained certain information detailed in my last annual report. Arrangements have now been made by which an officer with special qualifications in the new Department of Scientific and Industrial Research will endeavour to carry out a further investigation along the above lines.

BOYS AND GIRLS IN FACTORIES.

Certificates of fitness issued to boys and girls under sixteen years of age to work in factories: Boys, 1,199; girls, 1,547: total, 2,746: a decrease of 140 compared with the previous year.