

INSTALLATION ON SHIPS OF AUTOMATIC ALARM APPARATUS.

During the year automatic alarm apparatus for the detection of distress-signals was installed on the trans-Pacific cargo-steamers "Hauraki," "Waiotapu," and "Wairuna," and also on the Nelson ferry-steamers "Arahura" and "Ngaio."

SHIPS OPERATED BY WIRELESS SIGNALLERS: RESTRICTIONS UPON CLASSES OF MESSAGE HANDLED.

In view of the number of small vessels which are engaged entirely in the New Zealand coastal trade, and which in consequence never proceed far from land, the New Zealand Administration was, by special resolution of the International Radio-Telegraph Convention, 1927, conceded the right to issue to operators employed on such ships a special certificate (known as a wireless signaller's certificate) of a standard somewhat lower than that required for general international working. The condition attaching to such special concession is that ships manned by operators possessing this certificate participate only to a limited extent in the international service of public correspondence. With a view to enforcing this condition, the classes of message permitted to be handled by such ships have been restricted to the following: (1) matters of maritime urgency; (2) time of arrival of vessel; (3) berthing arrangements; (4) working of cargo; (5) notification of transfer of officers of ships' companies.

WEATHER REPORT AND FORECAST: ADOPTION OF NEW FORM.

A new form of weather forecast and report for broadcasting from the Wellington radio-station to ships at sea was brought into use on the 1st November, 1928. The new form of message, which gives more complete information regarding weather conditions throughout the Dominion, is also sent to the Radio Broadcasting Co. of New Zealand, Ltd., for dissemination from the Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Wellington broadcasting-stations. The broadcasting of such messages from the Auckland Radio-station has ceased, the service from the Wellington Radio-station and that from the stations of the Radio Broadcasting Co. being considered sufficient for ordinary purposes. The special weather-report messages forwarded to the radio-stations at Auckland and Wellington for the purpose of answering inquiries by ship stations were discontinued from the same date, the new form of message being sufficient to meet such inquiries. The charge for the new service is at the rate of £663 17s. 6d. per annum. The charge for the previous service was £66 13s. 4d. per annum. The increased charge is the result of a more comprehensive arrangement, and is a closer approximation to the actual cost of rendering the service. The discontinuance of the special weather reports to Radio-Wellington and Radio-Auckland for the purpose of answering inquiries of ships at sea has resulted in the abolition of the charge of £22 10s. per annum previously paid for the service.

BROADCASTING OF PRESS MESSAGES TO SHIPS AT SEA.

Press messages from the Wellington Radio-station to ships at sea previously broadcast at 10-15 p.m. daily are now broadcast at 10-30 p.m. The change was made in order to avoid clashing with other services.

POST-RADIOGRAM SERVICE FROM SHIPS AT SEA TO NEW ZEALAND COAST STATIONS.

A post-radiogram service was inaugurated on the 1st December, 1928, for the transmission of messages from ships at sea to New Zealand coast stations. The rate of 3d. per word is made up as follows: Ship-station charge, 1d.; coast-station charge, including postage, 2d. The minimum charge is 2s. 6d., equal to the cost of a message of ten words. Messages are posted to addressees immediately upon receipt at coast stations.

BROADCASTING.

On the 31st March, 1929, there was a total of 44,609 receiving licenses throughout the Dominion. Of this total, 18,016 licenses were held in the Wellington District, 15,008 in the Auckland District, 8,478 in Canterbury, and 3,107 in Otago. The increase in the number of licenses has enabled the Broadcasting Co. to extend in several directions the service given. It is understood that the company is contemplating further proposals for extending the scope of its stations, particularly in regard to the development of the relay system of broadcasting.

At the Wellington station, in addition to the usual afternoon, children's, and evening sessions, a programme of dinner music is provided between the hours of 6 and 7 p.m. At the Christchurch station, a Sunday afternoon session from 3 to 4.30 o'clock has been instituted. At the Dunedin station the silent nights were altered from Mondays and Thursdays to Mondays and Wednesdays. It is understood that the Radio Broadcasting Co. is considering the abolition of the silent night on Mondays at this station, thus bringing it into line with other centres.

Two low-power private broadcasting-stations were opened during the year. Station 2ZK was opened at Wanganui on the 20th June, 1928, and station 4ZO was opened at Dunedin on the 19th October, 1928.

Following a period of inactivity, private broadcasting-station 2ZM has been reopened at Gisborne.

While there is no reason to believe that much surreptitious use is made of radio receiving without payment of the prescribed license fees, the Department has been actively engaged throughout the year in detecting illicit sets and bringing offenders to book. The prosecutions for the year totalled 228, and the fines inflicted amounted in all to £191 4s. 6d.

The Department, in pursuance of its policy of ensuring to listeners the best service possible, continues to undertake an active campaign against the operation of sets which cause interference with reception by other licensees.