

During the inspection visits instructions in fire drill and in fire-prevention matters generally were given in the smaller towns; inspections have been made and reports furnished in respect of public buildings and institutions, advice has been given to Fire Boards and local bodies in regard to the purchase of fire-station sites, planning of new fire stations, water-supply installations, improvements, &c.; specifications for supply of plant and appliances have been drawn up; a number of tests have been made and reports furnished in respect of tentative inventions and improvements in fire-prevention equipment; also public addresses on the subject of fire-prevention have been delivered.

A conference authorized by the Department for the purpose of considering matters in connection with the safe storage of petrol in bulk, fighting of oil-fires, &c., was held in Christchurch during the progress of the big oil-fire which occurred in that city in August last. The conference was attended by the Superintendents of the principal brigades, as also by the Inspector of Explosives and the Inspector of Fire Brigades, and the opportunity afforded of observing the tactics employed by the Christchurch Fire Brigade to extinguish the fire was a valuable object-lesson to the brigade officers.

Following upon an invitation from the executive officers of the United Fire Brigades' Association, I attended the fifty-first annual conference held at Whangarei in March last, and there delivered an address to the delegates dealing with fire-prevention matters generally. The conference has requested that the address be printed and distributed to the brigades.

Two new Volunteer Fire Police Corps have been organized, making a total of fourteen corps now operating.

Chief officers of brigades in those towns wherein Fire Police Corps are established report in most appreciative terms of the valuable services rendered by these purely voluntary organizations, the members of which are all prominent persons in their respective towns.

Following are the principal improvements and additions to brigade equipment in various fire districts :—

Auckland: New district fire-station at Avondale completed and occupied in July.

Dunedin: Foundations of the new central headquarters station laid in March.

Hikurangi: New 20 h.p. motor hose-and-ladder tender.

Hokitika: A 35 h.p. motor hose-and-ladder tender fitted with 200-g.p.m. pump.

Levin: An electrically-operated siren installed in place of the street fire-alarm system.

Masterton: A most suitable centrally-situated site for the purpose of erecting a new central station thereon has been acquired.

Milton: An electric pumping-outfit has been installed to improve the water-supply.

Onehunga: A 30 h.p. chassis purchased and converted into a hose-and-ladder tender.

Waipukurau: Storage reservoir completed and a new 9 in. carrying main laid to the Borough boundary.

Wanganui: Section adjoining central station, with ten-roomed house thereon, purchased.

The following fatalities have been reported :—

Auckland: Miss S. Lynch, head waitress, Cargen Hotel, fell from fire-escape during progress of fire and died later from her injuries.

Christchurch: Mrs. Mather, severe burns due to lighted match igniting petrol vapour which set fire to her clothing, removed to hospital and died same night. Also a number of non-fatal casualties of a more or less serious nature are reported as having occurred to brigadesmen and civilians.

The number of fire calls received throughout the fifty fire districts during the twelve months ended 31st March, 1930, totalled 3,164, an increase of 118 over the previous twelve months. Of the total number 1,351 were property fires, 435 chimney fires, 573 bush, grass, and rubbish fires, 717 false alarms, and 88 out-of-district fires.

The fire loss throughout the fire districts for the twelve months (all losses quoted, unless otherwise stated, include loss sustained on both insured and non-insured property) amounted to £410,217. The four heaviest district losses occurred in Wellington (£102,803), Christchurch (£64,912), Auckland (£44,154), and Dunedin (£24,285).

Incendiarism or suspected incendiarism is reported as the cause of 58 fires, involving a loss of £51,328; and 46 fires occurred in unoccupied buildings, with a loss of £24,084. Following is a list of fires mostly due to want of a little precaution in domestic matters: Sparks from washing-coppers and open-grate fire-places were responsible for 90 fires, causing a loss of £13,080; switches left on electric irons, kettles, and heaters, 41 fires, loss £8,809; gas left on, rings and stoves, 28 fires, loss £6,070; airing clothes, 16 fires, loss £5,393; matches thrown down alight, 141 fires, loss £48,029; cigarette-butts and smoking, 55 fires, loss £9,081; lighted candles, 12 fires, loss £1,624; live ashes thrown out, 28 fires, loss £1,388; benzine vapour in proximity to light, 46 fires, loss £2,144: a total of 457 fires causing a loss of £95,620. But in addition to the said 457 fires in which the causes of the outbreaks were ascertained, there is to be reckoned with, as largely in the same category in regard to carelessness, the 375 fires involving a loss of £195,000 reported as of "unknown" origin, and that are in most cases the "late call" and more extensive fires in which all trace of the "cause" had been destroyed. In the published opinion of well-known authorities in different parts of the world it is estimated that carelessness is responsible for from 75 to 90 per cent. of all outbreaks of fire, so it is a safe assumption that at least 70 per cent. of the 375 fires in question had their genesis in carelessness, thus making a total of 832 out of the 1,351 outbreaks in the fifty fire districts, with a