

It is proposed to issue quarterly statistics showing the growth of commercial air transport in New Zealand. The first of these statements, covering the quarter ended on 31st March, 1936, is as under :—

Number of licensees operating regular services	..	..	..	4
Number of machines in use	..	..	..	8
Number of miles flown	..	..	..	187,170
Number of passengers carried—				
Paying	..	..	..	5,735
Non-paying	..	..	..	171
				5,906
Weight of goods and excess baggage carried (lb.)	..	..	..	7,008
Weight of mails carried (lb.)	..	..	..	6,485
Number of air-taxi licenses in operation	..	..	..	20

11. MOTOR ACCIDENTS.

Statistics taken from the reports of coroners' proceedings, showing details of fatal road accidents during the seven years ended 31st March, 1936, are set out in Table No. 16 of the Appendix.

The total number of deaths for the year 1935-36—*i.e.*, 203—is the second highest yearly total yet recorded, being exceeded only in 1930-31, when 247 deaths were recorded. The following table shows the annual figures correlated to the average number of vehicles on the road :—

Year ended 31st March,				Average Number of Vehicles on the Road.	Deaths.	Deaths per 10,000 Vehicles.
1930	..	..	..	177,486	186	10·5
1931	..	..	..	187,708	247	13·2
1932	..	..	..	183,806	157	8·5
1933	..	..	..	179,680	143	8·0
1934	..	..	..	178,925	135	7·5
1935	..	..	..	188,125	182	9·7
1936	..	..	..	194,456	203	10·4

This table shows that there is an increase in the number of deaths per 10,000 as the number of vehicles on the road increases. Attention is directed to the fallacy of endeavouring, by considering the number of deaths per 10,000 vehicles, to compare the relative safety on New Zealand roads with that of countries overseas. In New Zealand, for instance, there are approximately seven potential victims to each motor-vehicle, while in Britain in 1934 there were twenty-five. It is difficult to arrive at a fair basis of comparison of the road-fatality statistics of several countries.

Motorists were at fault in approximately 66 per cent. of the total fatalities, the chief factor being excessive speed in the circumstances, which was a feature in 18 per cent. of the total. It is a difficult matter to assess speed in every accident. Intoxication of the driver was a factor in only 2·5 per cent. of the fatalities. Recent investigations made by the British Medical Association at the invitation of the Minister of Transport in Britain showed that the effect of alcohol taken in doses insufficient to produce a state of "inability to operate a motor-vehicle" was to impair driving-efficiency for several hours after the liquor had been consumed. Tests made in the United States of America showed that in 119 consecutive accidents investigated alcohol in excess of 0·02 per cent. was present in the blood of 74 of the drivers. There is, therefore, every probability that sub-intoxication was present in a much larger percentage of the cases in New Zealand than is stated in the statistics.

The principal points emerging from a study of Table No. 16 are as under :—

- (1) Accidents due to motor-vehicles colliding with pedestrians have increased from 46 in 1934-35 to 56 in 1935-36.
- (2) Collisions between motor-vehicles increased from 36 to 45 during the same period.
- (3) Collisions between motor-vehicles and bicycles increased from 23 to 27.
- (4) Of the 191 fatal accidents, 43 occurred on Saturdays and 34 on Sundays.
- (5) Twenty-nine of the victims were under the age of fifteen years, as compared with 26 for the previous year.
- (6) Motor-cycles figured in an increased number of accidents, notwithstanding a reduction in the average number of motor-cycles on the road.
- (7) Driving on the wrong side of the road contributed to 22 fatalities, as compared with 16 during the previous year.
- (8) The motorist was at fault in 13 cases of collision with pedestrians, as against 7 last year.
- (9) Pedestrians crossing or on the road without care, or becoming confused, contributed to 25 fatalities, as against 17 last year.

The prevention of motor-vehicle accidents has been the subject of much attention by the Department during the year. In July of this year the Motor-vehicles Amendment Act, 1936, was passed. Its chief effects may be summarized as the provision of more substantial penalties for "hit-and-run" and drunken motorists, the unification of numerous local-body traffic by-laws into a single easily-understood code, and the restriction of speed in towns, boroughs, and other thickly populated areas to a maximum of 30 miles per hour. In the near future it is proposed to call a conference of bodies interested in this matter, with a view to organizing a wider and systematic campaign of