

The following is a summary of causes of electrical fires for the five-yearly period, 1933-37 :—

	1933.	1934.	1935.	1936.	1937.	Totals.
Electric irons	4	12	8	8	7	39
Electric radiators	2	..	1	2	..	5
Other electrical appliances	2	3	6	4	6	21
Defective installations	4	11	7	12	3	37
Defective flexible cords	..	..	..	..	3	3
Defective radio installations	1	..	..	..	1	2
Bedding in contact with lamp	..	..	..	..	1	1
Contact between distribution and service lines	..	..	..	..	1	1
Lightning	..	..	..	..	1	1
Soldering-iron	..	..	..	1	..	1
Totals	13	26	22	27	23	111

REGISTRATION OF ELECTRICAL WIREMEN.

The year under review has been a very active one, due mainly to the increased activity in the building and allied trades. The number of candidates for the examination has increased in the written part to 335 from a minimum of 231 in 1934-35, and in the practical part to 227 from a minimum of 149 in 1935-36. The centres at which examinations are held have now been increased in number in order to provide better facilities for the candidates. These centres had been reduced during the period of restricted trade.

Registrations increased to 225 from a minimum of 132 in 1931-32.

The number of inspectors registered during the year shows a big increase, from 26 last year to 59, due partly to a general change of positions; there have, however, been 48 new inspectors registered. The registration of persons engaged in the radio industry continues at a steady rate, there having been 67 registered during the year. A number of applications for registration for this class of work indicated that the experience of the applicant had not been gained in a legal manner. The matter was taken up with the Radio Institutes, with the trade papers, and a circular letter was sent to all licensed radio dealers in an endeavour to warn future applicants that they must obtain experience in conformity with the Act.

Eleven persons were registered for the assembly and repair of electrical apparatus, but it is quite evident there is a large number of unregistered persons engaged in this class of work, and reports received of the dangerous manner in which some of this work is carried out indicates that more active steps should be taken to put a stop to the practice. The dangerous work is mainly done in retail establishments by salespeople. Where assembly or repair work is carried out by other than a registered person it must be inspected and tested by a registered person.

Reports of breaches of the Act show a decided increase, from 47 last year to 67, although they are considerably less than the peak year—namely, 1930-31—when 112 reports were received. In addition to the breaches of the Electrical Wiremen's Registration Act, records have been made of breaches of the Wiring Regulations by registered persons, such breaches being other than defective work and including failing to obtain permission before commencing wiring and before connecting wiring and apparatus to the source of supply and also including failure to notify the supply authority of completion of work. A total of 49 reports of breaches of the Wiring Regulations were received. Six wiremen were prosecuted for failing to return on demand the registration certificates which had been issued to them. Four salesmen were prosecuted for installing washing and ironing machines. All of these machines had been installed in a dangerous manner. A salesman was prosecuted for installing in a particularly dangerous manner in a shop-window a luminous-discharge-tube electric sign, in that bare wires at a pressure of 6,000 volts were readily accessible to children. Two unregistered persons were prosecuted for installing radio sets.

It is to be regretted that there are still a number of consumers who will not avail themselves of the protection provided by the Act, but prefer to take risks by doing their own repairs and extensions. The increased use of radio-receiving sets has undoubtedly had a bearing on this matter, so also has the unrestricted sale of accessories and flexible cord to the general public. Consumers who have the idea that the work is quite simple often neglect elementary precautions known to all skilled wiremen. In the majority of cases the consumer experiences no ill effects, but occasional fires and accidents show the wisdom of having the work done by experts. During the year there was one fatal accident to a consumer caused by carrying out work on live wires and a fatal accident to an employee in an engineering works caused by work carried out by a fellow-employee.

Reports of defective work carried out by registered wiremen have decreased slightly during the year, from 32 last year to 29, but the number is still in excess of the minimum number reported in any one year—namely, 26 in 1932-33. The Act provides for the endorsement of the registration certificates of persons who have carried out defective work and also for the removal of their names from the register when necessary. Provision is made for the removal of an endorsement after twelve months. Four endorsements were made during the year and five were removed.

Steps were taken during the year to bring the provisions of the Act under the notice of mine-managers, as a certain amount of misunderstanding existed due to the fact that, although the Acts relating to mines require competent persons to do the work, it was not clear that these persons had to be registered.