

liquids, is that they need never have occurred save for ignorance or negligence on the part of the victims. The replenishing of lamps or stoves with inflammable liquids should never be done in the vicinity of naked lights or flames, and the container from which the liquid is drawn should be securely closed and removed before any attempt is made to light the apparatus.

A further fatal accident which caused the death of a boy of four years occurred during the refuelling of the tank of a motor-lorry at a petrol-pump. The fuel-tank of the lorry was situated underneath the seat of the cab, close to the battery. When the metal nozzle of the pump-hose was inserted in the opening to the fuel-tank contact was accidentally made with the positive terminal of the battery and a spark produced which ignited the vapour. The hose was hastily pulled out of the tank by the operator, and the burning petrol splashed over the child, who was playing by the lorry. An investigation into the cause of the accident did not disclose that there had been any breach of the regulations, and the ignition was a purely fortuitous occurrence which is seldom likely to be experienced. The action of the operator in jerking the nozzle out of the fuel-tank directly the fire occurred was, however, most ill-considered, and he did not appear to realize that under the circumstances the fire could very easily have been subdued by jamming the nozzle into the opening of the tank and smothering out the flames by sealing with sack or heavy cloth any annular space between the nozzle and the side of the filling opening.

An unusual accident and one which is rare in New Zealand was the explosion of a cloud of sulphur dust at one of the big chemical-works. While such industries do not come within the control of the regulations administered by this Department, the explosion was of interest, and the circumstances were investigated at the request of the parties concerned. In the portion of the works reserved for the handling of sulphur, this element was unloaded from railway-trucks into a boot below ground-level and was thence conveyed to the store-room by means of an endless chain of buckets driven by a winch situated in a penthouse at the top of the building and actuated by an electric motor. The conveyer had slipped off the pulley at the top, and several workmen were sent up to replace it. The belt had actually been replaced when, for some reason or other, the conveyer commenced to run backwards, and almost at once the sulphur was noticed to be on fire. The fire flashed down the elevator shaft, and several of the men were trapped in the penthouse before they could escape. One man was killed, and several others were partially asphyxiated and received more or less severe burns. Whilst the cause of the ignition of the sulphur dust was not determined with certainty, it appears most probable that when the conveyer commenced to run backwards one of the men threw over a pawl which normally would engage a cog wheel on the same shaft as the pulley and would serve to check the backward movement. The action of throwing over this pawl to engage in the teeth of the wheel which was already moving would no doubt cause some sparking, probably of sufficient intensity to ignite the cloud of sulphur dust raised by the action of the conveyer in slipping backwards.

In addition to the above, reports were received as usual of a number of minor accidents in the handling and use of inflammable liquids. Every year brings forth a certain number of accidents in connection with refuelling of motor-vehicles, but in the reports this year there is nothing worthy of special mention.

CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS ACT.

Licenses.—The following licenses were issued during the year ended 30th September, 1937, corresponding figures for the previous year being given in parentheses: Exhibitors, 427 (424): circuit exhibitors, 42 (38): renters, 18 (16): storage 12 (13): miscellaneous, 36 (54).

Legislation.—During the year the Board of Trade (Cinematograph Films) Regulations, 1935, were revoked and the Cinematograph Films (Issue of Exhibitors' Licenses) Regulations 1937, substituted. The new regulations not only removed anomalies existing in the original ones, but also gave the licensing officer wider powers in the matter of requiring that licensed exhibitors should provide a satisfactory standard of entertainment and reasonable theatre amenities. It is generally recognized that, where there is in force a licensing system which has the effect of restricting the number of licenses held in any locality, certain safeguards are necessary to ensure that licensees do not take unfair advantage of the virtual monopoly created and that they also provide a standard of service which is adequate for the requirements of the district. The new regulations are designed to give the licensing officer power to see that these conditions are complied with. Representations were made during the year by the motion-picture projectionists for the enactment of legislation providing for the licensing of all operators. Since both the Motion Picture Exhibitors' Association and the Film Exchanges' Association signified that they were in accord with this principle, it is now proposed to bring down regulations requiring that all projectionists be licensed.

Accidents.—In the year under review eight fires occurred during the projection of cinematograph film. This represents a considerable increase over the average number of fires in previous years. Some increase in the number of fires was to be expected since, owing to the era of prosperity which the country is at present experiencing, many theatres are now screening on a greater number of days per week than heretofore, and, in addition, a number of new picture-halls have been opened up at Public Works camps throughout the country. It is, however, pleasing to record that in only one case was more than one reel of film involved in the fire. The view of the Department is that if the operator acts correctly in the event of a fire then the damage should be ordinarily confined to the burning of one reel. However, where there are two machines in the projection-room, as is the case in the majority of New Zealand theatres, there is a particular danger period existing during the change-over from one machine to the other. Should an outbreak of fire occur at this critical period there is always a possibility of the reel of film on the second machine being involved, but, even so, if the operator follows out the instructions given by the Department the loss should not exceed the two reels. It is to be noted that the one fire recorded in which two reels of film were destroyed occurred at the change-over period. The operator promptly switched off his machines and removed the programme box from the projection-room, thus preventing the destruction of any further film.