

AERONAUTICAL INSPECTION.

During the period 364 inspections of aircraft or of aircraft engines and components were carried out by the inspection staff of the Department. The distribution of aircraft throughout the Dominion is such that considerable travelling is involved in this inspection work. This amounted to 32,700 miles for the year by two Inspectors and necessitated a total absence of 203 days from headquarters.

ACCIDENTS TO CIVIL AIRCRAFT.

There were twenty-five flying accidents in the Dominion requiring notification under the Air Navigation Regulations. Of this total, three had fatal consequences and three resulted in serious injuries to personnel.

The following summary gives the numbers of accidents in the various classes of flying :—

Commercial services	2
Student pilots—	
While landing on aerodrome	7
While taking off from aerodrome	4
Forced landing while on cross country	4
Loss of control	2
Qualified pilots—	
Forced landing due to engine failure	2
While landing on aerodrome	1
Error of judgment resulting in loss of control	2
Low flying	1
	25

Causes of Accidents.

Errors of judgment or faulty airmanship were the sole cause of accident in 60 per cent. of the cases.

Engine failure contributed to two major crashes which resulted in serious damage to the aircraft but no injury to the occupants.

Two minor landing accidents occurred to commercial aircraft operating on regular air routes. No injury was caused to passengers or personnel.

One accident to a club aircraft, while being flown on a cross-country charter trip, in which the passenger was killed and the pilot severely injured, was due to the pilot flying into conditions of bad visibility and striking a hill when turning back.

One crash causing the death of the passenger was due to faulty airmanship on the part of a club pilot, resulting in loss of control of the aircraft.

A student pilot was killed while engaged in acrobatic flying close to the ground; he was carrying out these manoeuvres without permission and in advance of his training.

An accident resulting in the complete destruction of the aircraft was caused by a pilot losing control when stunting too near the ground. The pilot escaped with light injuries.

Bad weather accounted for one accident in which the aircraft was severely damaged, but the student pilot in control was not injured.

The remaining accident was due to the student pilot concerned becoming lost and landing away from an aerodrome.

There was no case of fire in the air nor of structural failure while in flight.

While the number of accidents involving loss of life was the same as last year, the number of lives lost was one less. In each case where loss of life occurred a technical Board of inquiry with a Magistrate as Chairman was set up to investigate and report upon the accident. All other accidents involving injury to the occupants or serious damage to the aircraft were investigated and reported upon by the Inspector of Air Accidents.

There has been an increase in the number of landing accidents over the last period, but this can be accounted for by the greater number of pilots under instruction and the increased number of hours flown solo by student pilots.

REGISTRATION OF AIRCRAFT.

The number of certificates of registration issued during the year was forty-four, this figure being approximately three times greater than the number issued during the previous year. Of the forty-four aircraft registered during the year, thirty-three were aircraft registered for the first time and eleven were aircraft which changed ownership and were registered anew.

Changes of ownership, dismantling, crashes, &c., caused the cancellation of sixteen certificates during the year, leaving a total of one hundred and six aircraft registered on 31st March, 1938, as compared with eighty-nine on 31st March, 1937; the increase in the number of aircraft was therefore seventeen, representing a 19-per-cent. increase on the figure for 1937.