

C. ROAD-ACCIDENT STATISTICS.

(1) INTRODUCTORY.

(a) *General.*

The compilation of statistics relating not only to fatal accidents, but also to those involving other personal injury was continued during the past year. The system of reporting and recording these accidents, which was inaugurated in March, 1937, has been somewhat improved, so that comprehensive details of most features of the accident trends can now be ascertained fairly readily.

(b) *Classification of Bodily Injuries.*

While at first it was left entirely to the judgment of the reporting officer to determine whether an injury should be classified as "serious" or "minor" it was later decided to adopt the broad definitions prescribed by the League of Nations Committee dealing with unification of accident statistics. The following bodily injuries were then defined as "serious"—fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, severe cuts and lacerations, severe general shock necessitating medical treatment, and any other injury involving removal to and detention in hospital. Only lesser injuries such as bruises and sprains were to be classified as "minor." The application of this classification immediately resulted in a large increase in the number of "serious" injuries which were reported, and a corresponding decrease in the "minor" injuries.

(c) *The Number of Accidents.*

The number of fatal motor accidents which occurred on the roads and streets of the Dominion during the year ended 31st March, 1939, was 225. There were also 4,158 other accidents where one or more of those involved received injury to their person. Altogether 246 persons were killed and 5,635 were injured.

(2) FATAL ACCIDENTS.

During the past five years 1,087 lives have been lost through motor-accidents which have occurred on the roads and streets of the Dominion. The following table shows how the death-rate per million gallons of petrol consumed by motor-vehicles has dropped steadily from 3.19 in 1935 to 2.69 in 1939. The number of deaths per 10,000 motor-vehicles has decreased from 9.63 in 1935 to 8.85 per 10,000 in 1939.

TABLE A.—ANNUAL DEATH-RATE AND ROAD USAGE DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

Year ended 31st March,	Number of Deaths.	Petrol Consumed (Million Gallons).	Deaths per Million Gallons.	Average number of Motor-vehicles on the Road.	Deaths per 10,000 Motor-vehicles.
1935	182	57.08	3.19	188,983	9.63
1936	203	64.99	3.12	203,817	9.96
1937	213	73.88	2.88	227,572	9.36
1938	243	84.43	2.89	252,359	9.63
1939	246	91.56	2.69	278,099	8.85
Totals	1,087	371.64	2.92	1,150,830	9.45

In a comparison of the fatal accidents during the year ended 31st March, 1939, with those which occurred during the preceding year the following main points emerge:—

- (i) The number occurring in the built-up areas has increased by 18½ per cent. Practically the whole of this increase is in respect of accidents occurring in the daylight.
- (ii) On the rural roads the converse applies. The fatal accidents have been reduced by 14 per cent., and the whole of the reduction is in respect of daylight accidents. The number occurring after dark has actually increased by one.
- (iii) The most marked variation from the previous year in respect of type of accident is an increase of 10 in the number of non-collisions occurring at night. These consisted mainly of instances where the vehicle left the road or overturned on the roadway.

The following table shows for purposes of comparison the details of the fatal accidents which occurred during each of the two years 1937–38 and 1938–39.