

1941.

NEW ZEALAND.

FIRE BRIGADES OF THE DOMINION

(REPORT ON THE) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1941, BY THE INSPECTOR OF FIRE BRIGADES.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

THE INSPECTOR OF FIRE BRIGADES TO THE HON. THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

Office of the Inspector of Fire Brigades,
Wellington, 28th August, 1941.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the thirty-third annual report, for the year ended 31st March, 1941, on the working of the Fire Brigades Act, 1926.

DOMINION FIRE WASTE.

The loss by fire in New Zealand during 1940 was £722,692, being an increase of £62,079 on the losses for 1939. This increase is probably due in the main to the higher values of both buildings and contents involved in fire. The fire losses in fire districts for the year ending 31st March, 1941, and which are therefore not strictly comparable with figures for the whole Dominion, were £242,689, which is a reduction on the corresponding figures for the previous year.

The losses in large fires (over £5,000) still appear to be the determining factor in the annual fire losses for the Dominion. The losses in these fires are shown in the table set out below and, while not as high as for the previous two years, they are still substantial. It is evident the cycle of large fires referred to in last year's report is continuing. Owing to the war it has not been possible to obtain much of the statistical information on which the previous reports were based, and for this reason the comparative tables previously published have been discontinued.

Fires with Loss exceeding £5,000, Year ending 31st March, 1941.

Locality.	Day and Date.	Time.	Occupation of Premises in which Fire occurred.	Cause of Fire.	Loss.
Auckland ..	Thursday (27/2/41) ..	12.36 a.m.	Lead-mills and plumbers	Unknown	£ 9,000
Dunedin ..	Tuesday (25/6/40) ..	5.17 a.m.	Brewery	Unknown	45,999
Timaru ..	Friday (28/3/41) ..	2.18 p.m.	Millers and biscuit-factory	Unknown	22,914
Wellington ..	Tuesday (23/4/40) ..	2.35 a.m.	Clothing-factory and electrical engineering works	Spontaneous combustion	15,135
Wellington ..	Thursday (18/7/40) ..	8.50 a.m.	Apartment-house ..	Hot ashes placed in wooden box	5,234
Wellington ..	Tuesday (8/10/40) ..	2.4 a.m.	Warehouse and offices	Radiated heat from gas-ring	5,203
					103,485

DEATH AND INJURY IN FIRES.

During the year fires were responsible for nineteen deaths and fourteen cases of serious injury. Of the deaths, fifteen were caused by persons being trapped in burning buildings, one by clothing catching light, and two by use of petrol for home dry-cleaning. Of the nineteen fatalities, five involved children, all of whom were trapped in burning buildings. There is one other fatality which calls for special comment, and that is the case of a man who was knocked down and killed by a fire engine responding to a fire call which turned out to be a malicious false alarm. It is doubtful whether any appeal to the persons with the warped mental outlook which results in the giving of these false alarms would be successful. The only effective deterrent would appear to be the imposition of a heavy penalty on detection, and the fact that one of these false alarms has resulted in the death of an unfortunate bystander may cause the Courts to view the offence in a more serious light.

EMERGENCY FIRE PROTECTION.

During the year under review it has been necessary to discontinue almost entirely the ordinary inspection work and to concentrate attention on the preparation of an emergency fire-fighting organization. A technical committee consisting of the Superintendents of the principal city brigades was set up to advise the Government on the fire-protection measures necessary to meet conditions likely to arise in the event of enemy attack. The recommendations of this committee were in the main accepted by the Government, and arrangements were made for the establishment of an emergency fire service of 2,100 men in the cities and larger secondary towns. The general conditions of service of this force are similar to those applying to the Territorial Army, and the Government and the local authorities are co-operating in the provision of the extra fire-fighting equipment necessary for emergency operation. Most of this equipment is being manufactured in New Zealand. The necessary authorizing regulations were gazetted in February, 1941, and recruitment and training had been commenced before the end of the year.

ADMINISTRATION.

No new fire districts were created during the year, but in view of the Government's decision not to proceed with the proposed amending legislation during the war period the Minister has agreed to permit the formation of several additional fire districts which will be constituted during the coming year. Routine reports have been made regarding protection of Government buildings, and on water-supply and fire-equipment loans for the Local Government Loans Board ; a considerable number of inspections of military camps and Air Force stations have also been made.

Attached are statistical tables covering the year under review.

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R. GIRLING-BUTCHER,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

TABLE I.—MISCELLANEOUS STATISTICS FOR FIRE DISTRICTS.

District.	Popula- tion.	Rateable Capital Value.	Insurance Companies Premium Income.	Number of Fire Calls.	Fires Invol- ving Loss of Pro- perty.	Insurances on Property Involved in Fires.	Insured Fire Loss, Buildings and Contents.	Uninsured Fire Loss, Buildings and Contents.	Total Fire Loss.	Authorized Expenditure for Year ending March 31st, 1942.
		£	£			£	£	£	£	£
Auckland Metro- politan	183,950	66,564,066	224,247	996	186	1,987,377	36,366	3,452	39,818	47,280
Balclutha ..	1,690	343,597	1,743	8	2	2,274	111	..	111	290
Birkenhead ..	3,450	800,474	4,676	13	4	1,655	586	70	656	610
Cambridge ..	2,330	689,175	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	592
Christchurch ..	100,000	29,197,221	107,315	552	137	418,035	16,446	1,270	17,716	22,990
Dannevirke ..	4,400	1,455,563	5,696	20	5	2,460	40	62	102	630
Dargaville ..	2,280	618,580	3,137	8	3	105	25	..	25	536
Dunedin Metro- politan	77,340	25,279,728	82,340	662	106	612,435	61,237	840	62,077	26,762
Eltham ..	1,880	386,102	1,820	..	..	..	..	..	..	600
Feilding ..	4,720	1,312,660	5,076	9	1	2,100	5	..	5	710
Foxton ..	1,510	260,183	1,836	12	4	3,425	138	535	673	293
Gisborne ..	13,900	4,176,874	20,154	34	13	24,905	2,158	408	2,566	3,396
Greymouth ..	8,460	1,584,582	8,570	10	8	18,700	2,966	25	2,991	1,310
Hamilton ..	17,950	5,948,197	20,057	95	11	21,275	5,764	36	5,800	5,900
Hastings ..	13,650	4,033,520	16,173	39	13	32,830	2,319	10	2,329	2,675
Hawera ..	4,790	1,494,774	6,726	23	7	32,760	251	23	274	2,250
Hikurangi ..	1,000	126,275	749	1	..	..	..	..	..	173
Hokitika ..	2,730	508,310	3,825	9	5	4,625	1,823	280	2,103	620
Invercargill ..	23,760	6,438,450	25,526	155	31	51,789	4,268	457	4,725	6,598
Kaipoi ..	1,610	322,965	*	9	2	1,904	58	2	60	538
Kaitangata ..	1,280	144,550	1,045	3	..	..	..	..	..	226
Lawrence ..	630	57,850	557	..	..	..	..	..	..	100
Levin ..	2,820	810,571	3,540	12	2	1,910	1,420	..	1,420	547
Masterton ..	9,480	2,781,581	11,822	57	10	18,915	368	343	711	3,981
Milton ..	1,370	264,560	1,870	3	1	300	15	..	15	250
Morrinsville ..	2,000	582,108	2,739	9	1	..	..	8	8	558
Napier ..	15,950	4,653,494	23,588	71	7	6,790	443	85	528	5,300
Nelson ..	11,400	3,310,381	16,188	38	11	59,625	1,609	430	2,039	3,742
New Plymouth ..	17,550	5,319,022	17,392	68	7	26,860	125	55	180	4,052
Oamaru ..	7,610	1,582,658	7,972	26	1	6,100	248	..	248	1,075
Ohakune ..	1,390	105,634	1,113	7	2	1,000	190	..	190	290
Opotiki ..	1,510	379,861	*	..	..	..	..	..	..	445
Otaki ..	1,820	310,525	1,671	4	..	..	..	..	..	454
Pahiatua ..	1,740	454,550	3,183	11	1	4,500	79	..	79	686
Palmerston North	23,600	7,243,564	28,736	126	18	98,947	1,650	200	1,850	9,060
Petone ..	11,050	3,287,120	15,202	35	9	20,550	1,431	480	1,911	3,140
Port Chalmers ..	2,020	325,075	1,802	4	3	2,600	2,085	..	2,085	277
Pukekohe ..	2,690	903,684	2,881	14	3	1,800	550	35	585	800
Rotorua ..	6,540	1,623,310	7,710	33	9	13,130	294	121	415	1,301
Taihape ..	2,210	428,523	3,324	23	4	1,650	164	1,450	1,614	588
Taumarunui ..	2,760	643,036	3,045	8	4	3,760	522	68	590	837
Tauranga ..	3,910	1,213,218	5,332	15	..	..	..	..	..	603
Te Aroha ..	2,450	828,821	4,010	5	2	2,445	1,395	10	1,405	315
Te Awamutu ..	2,570	998,430	3,510	14	3	5,200	605	..	605	440
Timaru ..	17,800	5,246,480	16,200	62	9	217,400	24,403	..	24,403	5,270
Waihi ..	3,970	337,092	3,085	17	1	175	175	200	375	576
Waipukurau ..	2,110	497,410	2,786	5	..	..	..	..	..	450
Wairoa ..	2,630	686,190	3,426	12	4	18,730	1,694	..	1,694	694
Waitara ..	2,060	363,452	3,212	1	1	800	800	..	800	351
Wanganui ..	23,400	6,221,022	27,790	189	19	45,848	3,681	535	4,216	10,444
Wellington ..	120,700	47,075,815	174,429	1,181	167	1,641,199	49,723†	2,206†	51,929†	47,200
Westport ..	4,240	596,975	4,601	10	4	5,380	282	..	282	740
Whakatane ..	2,160	582,404	2,843	9	3	2,000	88	57	145	600
Whangarei ..	7,600	2,629,699	*	17	5	2,475	329	7	336	977
Woodville ..	1,050	193,793	1,300	..	..	..	..	..	..	367
Areas protected by Fire Boards	795,470	254,223,754	948,170	4,744	849	5,428,743	228,929	13,760	242,689	231,489
	..	..	..	11	10	..	961	61	1,022§	..

* Figures not available.

† Returns incomplete.

§ All in area protected by Christchurch Fire Board.

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