

6. The number of fires during the year in which the loss exceeded £5,000 was nineteen, as compared with the previous record of fifteen in 1945-46. It is noteworthy that seventeen of these fires occurred between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. This fact emphasizes the necessity stressed on a number of occasions in these reports of developing the Fire Service with special reference to large fires and particularly those occurring in the night hours.

Table 2.—Fires with Loss exceeding £5,000

Locality.	Day and Date.	Time.	Occupation of Premises in which Fire occurred.	Cause of Fire.	Loss.
					£
Auckland ..	Friday, 30/8/46 ..	9.30 p.m.	Bedding-factory ..	Unknown ..	10,880
Christchurch ..	Thursday, 8/8/46 ..	10.46 p.m.	Picture-theatre and shops ..	" ..	14,055
" ..	Thursday, 15/8/46 ..	4.13 p.m.	Joinery-factory ..	" ..	15,327
" ..	Monday, 19/8/46 ..	11.52 p.m.	Footwear-factory ..	" ..	72,443
" ..	Friday, 14/3/47 ..	8.44 p.m.	Wool-store ..	" ..	10,719
Dannevirke ..	Thursday, 19/12/46 ..	1.45 a.m.	Box-factory ..	" ..	10,000
Dunedin ..	Tuesday, 6/8/46 ..	9.10 p.m.	Clothing-factory ..	Lighted cigarette ..	12,864
Invercargill ..	Friday, 20/12/46 ..	5.06 a.m.	Warehouse ..	Unknown ..	21,400
Lower Hutt ..	Friday, 7/6/46 ..	6.30 a.m.	Church ..	Gas heating-system left on ..	5,680
" ..	Friday, 14/2/47 ..	3.38 a.m.	Joinery-factory ..	Spark from fire ..	8,500
Napier ..	Tuesday, 5/11/46 ..	11.40 p.m.	Hospital laundry ..	Electric iron left on ..	24,000
Rotorua ..	Monday, 21/10/46 ..	3.05 a.m.	Sawmill ..	Unknown ..	5,750
Tauranga ..	Friday, 28/10/46 ..	2 a.m.	Fruit-packing shed ..	" ..	9,840
Te Awamutu ..	Wednesday, 19/2/47 ..	9 p.m.	High school ..	Arson ..	6,288
Upper Hutt ..	Wednesday, 11/12/46 ..	4.40 a.m.	Orphanage ..	Electric-wiring defect ..	13,550
Wanganui ..	Monday, 30/12/46 ..	10.19 p.m.	Hotel ..	Unknown ..	33,216
Wellington ..	Wednesday, 25/9/46 ..	3.15 a.m.	Wool-store ..	" ..	676,700
" ..	Sunday, 23/3/47 ..	4.53 a.m.	Offices and store ..	" ..	8,103
Whangarei ..	Sunday, 2/3/47 ..	1 p.m.	Retail store ..	" ..	50,315
				Total ..	1,009,630

LOSS OF LIFE IN FIRES

7. Fourteen deaths occurred in or from burns received at fires during the year. The fact that this number is one below the average of a ten-year period for which records have been kept is in itself sufficient to justify the expenditure necessary for the resumption of fire-prevention work. Eleven of the deaths resulted from fires in dwellings, in one case a baby died from burns received in the ignition of its pram, and two deaths resulted from an explosion of petrol vapours.

NEW LEGISLATION

8. Very little progress had been made with the Fire Service Bill before the end of the year under review. The departmental draft of the proposed Bill was circulated to the interests concerned in August, 1946, and the proposals were fully reviewed in this report last year. A definite indication was given that Government would not proceed with the legislation unless the conflicting interests could compromise their major differences and come to an agreement at least on the principles involved. This agreement was not achieved until the end of August, 1947, and representations were then made to the Minister asking for certain modifications of the draft Bill and that the legislation be enacted this year. It is very unlikely that this will be practicable. The delay in reaching agreement was due in large measure to the controversy which has been going on for some years past with respect to the service conditions of both the permanent firemen and of the volunteer brigades. A brief review of both questions in this report is therefore warranted.