

SIR,—

Office of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 9th June, 1909.

I beg to submit, for the consideration of your Board, a report in connection with my inspection of your brigade on the 21st and 22nd May last.

On the evening of the 21st ultimo, at 8.12 p.m., I gave an alarm from the fire-alarm box situated at the Albion Hotel, corner Hobson Street. The motor arrived at 8.13.52½ p.m. (1 minute 52½ seconds from the time of call)—a very satisfactory result. The horse-reel and horse-escape also arrived on the scene promptly. Two deliveries were got to work, and the escape elevated very smartly. Other drills and demonstrations were gone through during the evening, and were carried out in an efficient and creditable manner generally.

I noted during my inspection on the 22nd that the horse hose-and-ladder wagon at the Ponsonby Station has been replaced by a motor-car; but I would call your attention to certain recommendations contained in my report addressed to you dated the 7th August, 1908, particularly to that part referring to the replacement at the Beach Road Station of the hand-drawn hose-cart by a horse-drawn or motor-driven machine.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS T. HUGO,

Percy Butler, Esq., Secretary, Auckland Fire Board.

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Office of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 19th November, 1908.

In reply to your letter dated the 11th November, 1908, and addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs, asking for a copy of the Inspector's report made in connection with his inspection of the Christchurch Fire Brigade, herewith I have the honour to forward you a report dealing with matters relating thereto.

At 7.30 p.m. on Thursday, the 3rd September, I gave a call by telephone to the Central Fire-station for an imaginary large fire in the neighbourhood of the Hereford Street Bridge, distant some 45 chains from the Lichfield Street Station, and about 35 chains from the Chester Street Station. The first appliance to reach the indicated spot was the motor chemical from the Central Station, and the first chemical jet was shown from that machine at 7.32.30 p.m., 15 seconds later than the first jet from the Chester Street chemical was shown. Water was shown from the first steam fire-engine at 7.34.25 p.m.; that from the second fire-engine was not timed, owing to some little delay in getting to work. The large escape was fully extended, and a man ready for work on the top of it, at 7.36.55 p.m. The first water was shown from the Railway engine at 7.39.50 p.m. These results were distinctly good; at the same time, they must not be taken (owing to the fact that the officers of the brigade were aware that they would be turned out during the course of the evening) as a result that would actually take place in case of a genuine alarm of fire, but more as an indication of what can and should be done, in case of necessity at any moment day or night, by a well organized, drilled, and properly equipped brigade.

Personnel of the Brigade.

The members of the brigade appear to be generally an intelligent body of men, active, and of good physique, but they are in need of more complete instruction and drill in the various branches of fire-brigade work. As your Board is in course of organizing a partially permanent brigade, I would respectfully point out the absolute necessity of introducing from the outset a clearly defined system of drills, duties, leaves, scale of pay, &c. Any subsequent alterations in these matters, except in the way of very decided concessions, invariably leads to dissatisfaction and friction amongst the men. When it is taken into consideration the manner in which permanent members of a fire brigade live—that is, for instance, the close confinement, the discipline that must be maintained, and many other things of necessity different from ordinary every-day life—it must be apparent what care is needed to start on a sound workable basis, and to avoid giving even any seeming cause for complaint.

Stations.

Though the Lichfield Street Station is in a fairly good position in regard to the risks of the town, the site as at present is not large enough for a central station; more accommodation for men, appliances, and drill purposes is required. The Chester Street Station should be done away with. The Lichfield Street site and station should be enlarged, or a larger piece of ground purchased, and a new station of a more modern design erected. The residential portions of the sub-stations also are limited. For very obvious reasons, married men should be placed in charge, and reside in these out-stations.

Plant and Appliances.

When the new motor-car now on order is placed in commission, the city portion of your brigade will be fairly well equipped in the matter of appliances; but motors should be furnished to each of the sub-stations. The advantage of these appliances in many ways must be recognised, and not the least is the matter of concentration in cases of emergency.

A greater number of fire-alarm points are required. Each out-station should have its own circle of fire-alarms, and be connected by a direct wire to the Central Station. Any further installation of street fire-alarms should be of a more modern type.