

I consider there has been a very distinct improvement since my previous visit in the method of work, drill, and general tone of the *personnel* of the brigade; but no great advance in efficiency of the whole system can be looked for until the proposed new station is erected, equipped in accordance with modern ideas, and a fire-alarm system installed; also, seeing that the average pressure of water obtained from the gravitation supply is not sufficient to deal effectively with a fire of any magnitude, the provision of pumping-power will sooner or later have to be taken into consideration.

PETONE.

SIR,—

Office of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 20th October, 1908.

In reply to your letter dated the 30th September last, addressed to the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs, asking for a copy of Inspector Hugo's report on the Petone Fire Brigade, plant, and premises, I have the honour to forward you a report dealing with those matters, as follows:—

At 7.2 p.m. on the evening of the 9th July I gave a call at the fire-station for an imaginary fire a short distance away, directing the Superintendent to get his brigade to work. The first water was shown at 7.5.25 p.m., or 3 minutes 25 seconds from the time of call. This was not a satisfactory result.

Personnel of the Brigade.

The members of the brigade present at the meeting—eighteen, out of twenty on the roll—appear to be a well-set-up and smart body of men, but they are in considerable need of drill and instruction in the various subjects of fire-brigade work.

Station.

The site of the present station in relation to the risks of the town is a suitable one, but more accommodation is required; and, now that your Board has power under the amended Fire Brigades Act to borrow money for the purpose, the requisite accommodation can be provided without unduly increasing the yearly estimates.

Plant and Equipment.

By purchasing another 600 ft. of hose (as already proposed by you), a couple of fire-brigade hand-pumps, and another length of coupling-ladder, the plant and equipment should be sufficient for the time being.

Water Reticulation and Pressure.

The present reticulation is fair, with the exception that extensions are required, and that there are a large number of 3 in. mains. I would suggest that nothing less than 4 in. should be laid in future, as it has been found that 3 in. mains are not a good service from a fire-protection point of view, and further that it is a false economy to do so. The average pressure—72 lb.—is not a good working one. A test was made of the time taken to procure the additional pressure available in case of fire, and it took 11 minutes 45 seconds to obtain the maximum pressure—at the time, 96 lb. Care should be exercised that the telephones and line between the fire-station and the reservoir are maintained in good order; also that the manual engine is kept in good working-order, and in immediate readiness in case of anything going wrong with the high-pressure water system.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

Alexander Webster, Esq., Secretary, Petone Fire Board.

REPORT No. 2. (30th June, 1909.)

I made a second inspection of this brigade on the 7th June. A surprise false alarm was given from the Queen Street fire-alarm box at 8.22 p.m. on the date mentioned. Upon the arrival of the brigade they were directed to get a delivery to work, and water was shown at 8.26.29 p.m., or 4 minutes 29 seconds from time of call. Taking into consideration they had to travel about 600 yards, dragging the hose-reel with them, this result must be considered satisfactory. At the muster for inspection the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, thirteen men, and two messengers were reported present.

Considerable improvements have been made in the brigade and its equipment since my previous visit of inspection, but a new fire-station, with residential quarters for the Superintendent and sleeping-accommodation for the men, is urgently required.

The question of means of transporting the appliances other than that of dragging them by hand should be taken into consideration. The Town of Petone comprises 952 acres, which is a fairly large area; and under the present circumstances, if the call is for any distance from the station, by the time the men arrive at the fire with their plant they are completely exhausted, as was plainly evident upon their arrival at the Queen Street box in response to the false alarm given, and this just at the time when all their energies are required if they are expected to do smart and efficient work at a fire.