

A destructive fire took place on the 12th April last, destroying the New Zealand Paper-mills, situated in the Woodhaugh Ward of the Maori Hill Fire District. The buildings covered a considerable area, and containing, as they did, very inflammable material, the fire spread rapidly, and was quickly beyond the power of the limited (both in numbers and plant) strength of the brigade to cope with, although assisted by a contingent from each of the Dunedin and Roslyn Fire Brigades. As it is intended to rebuild the mills it is to be hoped that, in addition to other precautions, the various sections or buildings will be divided by substantial brick-wall fire-breaks that will enable the brigade to confine a fire to any particular section in which it may break out.

During the past year 2 fires have occurred in the Maori Hill Fire District, as against 4 during the previous year, a decrease of 2.

The fire loss amounted to £18,747 compared with £526, an increase of £18,221.

The estimated cost of the brigade for the year 1911-12 is £242, as against £255 for the year 1910-11, a decrease of £13.

MASTERTON.

Two inspections of the Masterton Fire Brigade and the Fire Police Corps with their equipments have been held—viz., 3rd November, 1910, and 30th January, 1911. A third visit was made in April last for the purpose of testing the newly installed street fire-alarm system.

The new Central Fire-station was officially opened on 3rd November, 1910. The building is constructed of brick, two stories in height, contains commodious engine-house, loose-boxes for two horses, watch-room, and all necessary offices, and one set of married quarters, all on the ground floor. On the first floor there is a large recreation-room, a meeting-room for the Fire Police, and accommodation for seven single firemen.

At the inspection on 30th January last there were present—Fire Brigade : Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and 18 officers and men ; these, with 2 on leave, account for the full strength—viz., 22 all told. Fire Police Corps : Captain, Lieutenant, and 12 constables, with 2 on leave ; total strength (16) accounted for. The attendance of both brigade and police was very satisfactory.

The various drills required were carried out smartly and efficiently by both bodies.

The plant and appliances are maintained in good order and condition.

Some delay was experienced when getting the steam fire-engine to work, due to the cover of the well from which the water was taken being entirely covered over with metal. A new cover should be fitted, and raised to a level with the ground.

The main firebell at the Central Station does not ring in a satisfactory manner, and this important matter should be attended to immediately.

Some new ropes, lighter than those at present in use, are required by the Fire Police.

A street fire-alarm system consisting of five circuits, and having a total number of twelve boxes or call-points, has recently been installed, and up to the present time has given every satisfaction. In this connection the following letter was sent to the secretary :—

“ SIR,—

“ Office of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 19th April.

“ Following upon my visit to Masterton on the 11th instant for the purpose of inspecting the newly installed street fire-alarm system, I beg to submit the following remarks for the consideration of your Board :—

“ The aerial circuits should have been, as recommended in the first instance, insulated instead of bare wire, for the principal reason that, running on the same poles and closely parallel to the telephone-lines, the alarm circuits are subject at any time to serious interference due to broken telephone-wires, &c.

“ The actual inspection and testing of the system was satisfactory with the exception of the three following items ; and when they have been attended to the installation should be in thorough good order and give very satisfactory results, outside the possible interference on the aerial lines as mentioned above :—

“ (1.) The transmitting-instruments require to be securely fixed to their basis so that they are immovable when winding up the instrument, thus obviating any possibility of the push-pins being thrown out of alignment.

“ (2.) The ringing keys or buttons on circuits D and E require adjustment.

“ (3.) The indicator relay fixed on the face of the instrument-board is at present too much exposed to the action of dust or dirt, therefore it should be covered in.

“ Of the auxiliary portable telephone attachments, only two of the circuits, C and E, were completed ; the tests were satisfactory, with the exception of a very minor adjustment required on the E circuit.

“ As a matter affecting the efficient working of the installation, I would suggest that your Board should frame very stringent rules dealing with any member of the brigade, other than those specially authorized so to do, who touches or interferes with any of the instruments or parts of the installation in the watch-room. Strangers should not be allowed to frequent the watch-room.

“ I have, &c.,

“ THOS. T. HUGO,

“ Inspector of Fire Brigades.”