

Rotorua—November, 16 1923 : King George V Hospital inspection and report.
 Hamilton—October 24, 1923 : Question new motor machine.
 Waihi—October 31, 1923 : Brigade dispute.
 Hamilton—November 22, 1923 : Testing of motor pumping-machine.
 Trentham—December 11, 1923 : Testing new motor pumping outfit.
 Featherston—December 18, 1923 : Inspection of camp.
 Hawera—March 18, 1924 : Special Board meeting—reorganization of brigade, &c.
 Trentham—March 24, 1924 : Inspection of camp, &c.
 Dunedin—May 15, 1924 : Special Board meeting.

Following upon an invitation received from the executive officers of the United Fire Brigades' Association, I attended their annual conference held in Rotorua in February last, and delivered an address to the delegates entitled "Training of Fire Brigade Officers, &c." At the request of the conference the address is to be printed and distributed amongst the brigades.

Inspections have been made and reports prepared in respect to public buildings and institutions ; also, as usual, advice has been given to local bodies and others in regard to fire-prevention, water-supply, &c., and specifications for the supply of plant and appliances have been drawn up.

During the year the Department has, on behalf of various Fire Boards and of the United Fire Brigades' Association, imported and distributed, in accordance with the requisitions received, 7,500 ft. of fire-hose, and various fire appliances and equipment that are not manufactured in the Dominion.

Following are the principal improvements and additions to equipment :—

Auckland—new district station in Ponsonby Road completed and in occupation.
 Balclutha—new central station completed and in occupation.
 Christchurch—tender accepted for the supply of a 90 ft. petrol electric fire-ladder.
 Dannevirke—35 ft. trussed extension fire-escape.
 Dunedin—purchase of site for erection of new central fire-station.
 Feilding—20 h.p. motor hose-and-ladder tender.
 Greymouth—hand-drawn one-cylinder 40-gallons chemical fire-engine.
 Hamilton—45 h.p. motor, 300-350 g.p.m. pump, hose-ladder, and first-aid pump combination machine.
 Hastings—45 h.p. motor hose-and-ladder tender, 35 ft. trussed extension fire-ladder.
 Invercargill—purchase of site for erection of new central fire-station. 60 h.p. motor 150-200 g.p.m. pump, hose, and ladder tender.
 Napier—new central fire-station completed and in occupation. 45 h.p. motor, 300-350 g.p.m. pump, hose-and-ladder combination machine.
 New Plymouth—30 h.p. hose-ladder and chemical engine.
 Oamaru—additions to central station premises.
 Palmerston North—plans for new central fire-station approved.
 Rotorua—street fire-alarm system of three circuits, having sixteen call-boxes thereon, installed.
 Te Aroha—new central station completed and in occupation.
 Waitara—20 h.p. motor hose-and-ladder tender.

The returns show a very large increase in the number of calls and actual fires. The total number of calls received throughout the fire districts for 1923-24 was 1,702, as against 1,148 for 1922-23, an increase of 554, made up under the separate headings as follows : Fires, 741 (589) ; increase, 152. Chimney fires, 223 (194) ; increase, 29. Bush and rubbish fires, 358 (103) ; increase, 255. False alarms, 319 (217) ; increase, 102. Out-of-district fires, 61 (45) ; increase, 16.

Of the 741 fires, 21 are reported as due to incendiarism, 13 as having occurred on unoccupied premises, and 214 as of unknown origin. The principal causes as shown by the returns are—sparks from copper fires and fireplaces, 78 ; motors backfiring, &c., 47 ; smoking and cigarette-butts, 34 ; lighted matches, 32 ; electricity, 44.

The total fire loss throughout the fire districts for the year ended 30th June, 1924, amounted to £358,024, as against £238,313 for the previous twelve months, an increase of £119,711. The three heaviest district losses occurred in Christchurch (£96,575), Invercargill (£47,221), and Auckland (£43,908), and which accounted for over half of the total loss.

The insured loss throughout the Dominion for the year ending 31st December, 1923, amounted to £831,373. The proportion of fire loss throughout the fire districts for the corresponding twelve months amounted to £187,779. The Dominion fire waste for the same period is estimated at £997,648, or 15s. 8d. *per capita* of the population estimated to the 1st April, 1923.

The insured loss for 1923 is £121,870 over that for 1922, and returns for the six months ending 30th June, 1924, tend to the supposition that the insured loss for the current year will considerably exceed that for 1923. For comparative purposes, to illustrate the huge and steadily increasing loss of property that vanishes in smoke every year, the insured losses for the last six years are here given : 1918, £462,540 ; 1919, £415,620 ; 1920, £452,890 ; 1921, £765,310 ; 1922, £709,503 ; 1923, £831,373 ; and if the foregoing figures err at all it is on the conservative side.

Quite 50 per cent. of the outbreaks of fire are easily preventible, mostly caused by sheer carelessness ; and, as pointed out and advocated for years past, the remedy is education. The United States of America and the Dominion of Canada, whose fire waste is somewhat on a par with that of New Zealand, have realized the necessity for a National movement toward the reduction of their huge loss, and this has resulted in very practical action being taken. Fire-prevention methods are now regularly taught in their schools and colleges ; "fire-prevention weeks" have been established by proclamation ; special