

continuous rainless periods upon the heavier types of potential fuel have proved extremely useful. The number of station days recorded as hazardous according to the arbitrary standard was two hundred for the eighteen stations; approximately half of this number of reports came from three stations in Canterbury during the long fire season.

45. Two new fire districts were created covering an area of 141,000 acres, and making a total of sixty fire districts constituted to date, with a total area of 3,431,068 acres. Notices constituting fire districts are published in the *Gazette* and set out the periods during which it is unlawful to burn save pursuant to a written permit from a forest officer. Under the provisions of the Spark Arrester (Forests Act) Regulations 1925, and a notice issued thereunder, it was specified that from the 1st day of October in any one year until the 30th day of April in the following year no external-combustion engine, except where exemption had been granted, should be used in a State forest or fire district unless provided and equipped with an approved spark-arrester. These regulations and the notice mentioned are now superseded by the Forest (Fire-prevention) Regulations 1940, which provide, *inter alia*, that, except with a written permit from a Conservator of Forests or other forest officer, no person shall use or operate in any State forest or fire district from the 1st day of August in any one year to the 30th day of April in the following year any locomotive, traction, portable, or stationary engine, or any steam or internal-combustion engine whatsoever which is not provided with safe and efficient devices, approved by the Conservator of Forests or forest officer, for arresting sparks or flame from funnel or exhaust and for preventing the escape of live coals or fire from ash-pan or fire-box, while the person in charge of any such engine must dump and totally extinguish any ashes in such a manner as to prevent the outbreak of fire.

Certain machinery used in ordinary course of farming operations is exempt from this provision. It is to be noted that the regulations cover all fire districts. Consequently, privately-owned forests which are protected by fire districts now come within the regulations.

The fire-district provisions apply principally to land-clearing operations and provide the most intensive and effective means of fire control yet devised. A permit to burn is issued subject to the actual burning being carried out only when weather conditions are safe, but by reason of the possibilities of sudden rises or changes of wind which are ever present, burning demands the utmost care and attention from the permittee to ensure that the fire does not get out of hand. Unfortunately, cases have been reported where precautions were most perfunctory and no attention was given to the fire after it had been lighted; ultimately the State forests were threatened, and only the promptness and vigilance of local officers checked the spread.

46. Although the fullest co-operation is extended by forest officers, land-occupiers must realize that it is their responsibility to see that as a result of their action no damage is done to adjoining properties, otherwise they are liable for the damage done. This position is now made clear in the new regulations, as clause 11 provides that a permit to burn given under the fire-district law shall not discharge the permittee from liability for damage caused by any fire lighted by him pursuant to such permit. It is further provided that no such permit is to be acted upon at the time mentioned therein if a heavy wind is blowing or if conditions are such as might cause a fire to spread beyond the limits of the area over which the permit is granted. Regulation 12 provides that the owner or occupier of any land adjoining a State forest or within a fire district upon which there is a fire in danger of spreading to a State forest or parts of a fire district is required immediately to cause the nearest forest officer to be notified, and in the interim to do his utmost to extinguish or curtail the fire, whether he lit it or not. The regulations provide also that in a State forest from the 1st August to the 30th of April following, or in a fire district during the closed season, no burning match, pipe-ashes, lighted cigarette or cigar, or other burning or smouldering substance, or ashes from a gas-producer, shall be left unless totally extinguished. Any person in a State forest or in a fire district, in whatever capacity, must, on becoming aware of an outbreak of fire, take prompt steps to suppress it and arrange for the nearest forest officer to be advised. Similar action must be taken