

Four fatal and forty-one serious accidents occurred at coal-mines during 1947, including three serious accidents at opencast mines.

Three of the fatal accidents took place in the Southern District and one in the West Coast District, in each district one fatality being due to falls of coal or timber.

All the serious non-fatal accidents due to falls of coal or timber occurred in the West Coast District, while the Northern District for 1947 had the very fine record of no fatal or serious accidents due to this cause.

Serious non-fatal haulage accidents were more evenly distributed, however, the Northern District having five of the total of fourteen, while the West Coast District had six and the Southern District three.

DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES

Of the fifty-four dangerous occurrences reported by Inspectors of Coal-mines during the year, no less than forty-seven were due to spontaneous heatings. Heatings of this nature are unfortunately a direct result of our methods in New Zealand of working thick seams, and until that method is changed will continue to cause considerable danger to personnel and heavy loss of coal.

The Northern District had twenty-three cases of heating, including no less than seven at the Mangapehi State Mine, while the West Coast District had thirteen cases and the Southern District eleven, the danger of the heatings being increased in several of the mines in these two districts by the presence of inflammable gas in the mines.

Four large accumulations of inflammable gas in the West Coast and Southern Districts occurred, but were cleared without trouble by attention to the ventilation. An accidental fire at the Wilton State Mine, due to brattice having been lit by an open light, was dealt with at once and fortunately caused no loss.

LEGISLATION

The Coal-mines Amendment Act, 1947, was passed during the year, making provision for (a) the manner of exchanging coal-prospecting licences for coal leases, (b) defence of actions for the recovery of damages for injury or death, and (c) the rate of payment of contributions to the Coal-miners' Relief Fund.

PROSECUTIONS

Six prosecutions were taken by Inspectors of Coal-mines for breaches of the Coal-mines Act or regulations, convictions being obtained in all cases.

I have, &c.,

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Inspecting Engineer and Chief Inspector of Coal-mines.