

## EXPLOSIVES AND DANGEROUS GOODS.

*Explosive Licenses.*—Importation licenses were as follow : Gelignite, 503,050 lb. ; blasting-gelatine, 2,500 lb. ; A2 monobel, 135,450 lb. ; quarry monobel, 10,000 lb. ; samsonite, 176,200 lb. ; blasting-powder, 75,000 lb. ; blasting-pellets, 87,500 ; smokeless powder, 22,480 lb. ; detonators, 900,000 ; E.D. fuses, 515,000 ; fireworks, 377 cases.

Other licenses were (corresponding figures for the previous year in parentheses) : Conveyance, 234 (249) ; sales, 590 (622) ; storage, 374 (388).

*Examination of Explosives.*—All shipments of explosives arriving in the country have been subjected to the usual examination, and there has been no recurrence of the trouble experienced in the case of the "Port Huon" consignment mentioned in the last annual report.

*Accidents.*—One fatal accident in the handling of explosives occurred during the year. A small quantity of gelignite had been purchased by a farmer for blasting stumps, and after storage in a cupboard in the house overnight had become frozen. In order to thaw them the plugs were placed on a small iron shelf at the foot of the oven of the kitchen range, and within a few minutes an explosion took place, with fatal injuries to the man's wife and one of his children. The man himself and another child, who were in the room at the time, escaped practically unhurt.

It is desirable to call attention to the dangers incidental to the handling of sodium chlorate, a compound which is finding extensive application in the farming industry for spraying noxious weeds. The chlorate is rich in oxygen and renders any organic matter with which it comes in contact highly inflammable—for instance, clothing impregnated with it will ignite readily from a spark or flame. A typical accident attended with fatal results occurred during the year. The victim had been spraying ragwort and his clothing had become well saturated with chlorate solution and had subsequently dried out. Whilst smoking a cigarette at lunch-time a glowing ember fell on his clothes, which burst into fierce flames. A further danger lies in the fact that sodium chlorate when intimately mixed with organic matter forms a powerful explosive which is extremely sensitive to friction and percussion, and which under ordinary conditions of handling is liable to explode prematurely. It is understood that at farmers' meetings such mixtures have been described as "cheap and simple explosives" for farm use. Several accidents—at least one with serious consequences—have been recorded during the year, the mixture used being sodium chlorate and sugar. Explosives formed from such mixtures are not authorized for use in New Zealand, and the Department has issued a warning that the mixing of sodium chlorate with other materials to form explosives is illegal, and that a prosecution will be taken against any person found engaging in the practice. Irrespective of any injury which may be incurred, those concerned in the manufacture of this class of explosive are liable to a heavy monetary penalty.

*Dangerous Goods.*—Local authority administration : No new licensing authorities under the Explosive and Dangerous Goods Amendment Act, 1920, were appointed. In the course of the year's work practically every licensing-authority district was visited at least once by a departmental Inspector.

Departmental administration : Inspection work in districts directly under the control of the Department was maintained as in past years. Licenses to the number of 2,033 were issued, as compared with 2,055 for the previous year.

Legislation : The proposed amendment to the Dangerous Goods Regulations, 1928, referred to in the last annual report, has been made. The amendment provides for—(1) Special construction of depots licensed to contain quantities of dangerous goods in cases in quantities exceeding 10,000 gallons, (2) the storage of drums apart from cased goods, (3) the installation of more than one petrol-pump inside a building if protected by an approved "water sprinkler" installation.

Accidents : Two fatal accidents involving dangerous goods were brought under notice. The first, which resulted in the death of a small boy aged two years and a half, occurred while his father was cleaning the engine of a motor-car with petrol. The petrol ignited, apparently from a spark caused by a short circuit, and the parent, in an attempt to prevent the fire communicating to spare petrol in a can, threw the contents away from the blaze. The petrol caught fire, and the blazing stream deluged the boy, who subsequently died in hospital from burns and shock. The second fatal accident was caused by the back-fire of an oil-furnace in the boiler-room of a factory. The burner is assumed to have failed temporarily, and on the foreman's attempting to relight it an explosion took place. The foreman was very badly burned and died from shock following the burns received. A number of minor accidents occurred during the year involving more or less serious personal injury or property damage. Fires whilst refuelling motor-vehicles account for the great majority of these accidents, and the causes were usually traceable to omission of some precaution laid down in the regulations. It is gratifying to note that no serious accidents due to home dry-cleaning have been reported. One accident worthy of mention was the explosion of an empty drum which was being cut in two with an acetylene torch. It was afterwards ascertained that the drum had been used for holding crank-case oil-drainings, which usually contain a small percentage of petrol. This type of accident is fortunately of infrequent occurrence in this country, and this particular one would never have taken place had the elementary precaution of thoroughly steaming out the drum been taken.

## CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS ACT.

*Licenses.*—During the year ended 31st September, 1932, licenses were issued as follow (corresponding figures for the previous year in brackets) : Exhibitors, 436 (446) ; circuit exhibitors, 25 (34) ; renters, 13 (16) ; storage, 5 (3).

*Accidents.*—Seven fires occurred in the projection of film, as compared with eight during the previous year. The quantity of film involved in these fires was very small, and in one case only was more than one spool burned. The enforcement of the safety regulations and the education of