Firemen Should Lead in Fire Prevention

Departments No Longer Simply Extinguishers of Fires—
The Chief and His Men Must Educate Citizens in Fire
Prevention—Must Know All Buildings in Their Departments

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A FEW years back all that could be said of American fire departments was that they were extinguishing units, and it was true. But today finds almost every fire department in America an extinguishing and a prevention unit. They are being backed up by state laws, and city ordinances and by the Underwriters to this end.

The Problem in a Nutshell

The old saying is "The only persons who can prevent loss by fire are the owners or occupants of the premises; upon them rests the responsibility of loss in nearly every fire." This is the problem in a nutshell. It is up to the fire department by lecture and propaganda and regular inspection to remove the dangers in our present buildings.

Do not talk of modern building laws, of fireproof buildings or future buildings. Your great danger is the old buildings in your city. Make them safe. Don’t run the risk of a conflagration. Don’t be responsible for a big fire.

Can Make Dangerous Buildings Safe

How many buildings have you, that you know are dangerous for your firemen to enter? You can make these buildings safe by removing the cause and remodeling. You can confine the fire to one floor. By enclosing stairways and elevators in brick, tile, concrete and wire glass in metal frames.

You can keep the fire from extending from one building to another by closing up all openings in walls and by wire glass in metal frames, fire shutters and outside sprinklers. You can make your old building safe by sprinklers.

Your new buildings are of little worry for you can show the owner and architect his dangers before the building is started and the dividing of the building by fire walls, etc., will repay their cost, as also will the proper placing of exits, enclosed stairways, wire glass, metal frames, doors, automatic sprinklers, etc. Your real work is with your present buildings.

Co-operation with Other Officials

Most states have factory inspectors and the co-operation between the fire chief, fire marshal and factory inspector will bring great results. The building in-

proper of your city is another arm to help you. A follow up system on fire department inspections and the backing up of these inspectors will bring results.

Talks before civic bodies, Boy Scouts, school children and their parents are great aids to your work. You have got to educate your city. The effect of this education will be shown by the co-operation you receive.

Proper Remedies Should Be Applied

The main causes of fire you know. You should apply the proper remedies, and cover all preventive causes. Then next is protection. This means how will the fire be discovered, extinguished or retarded until the arrival of the fire department. Your sprinkler and automatic alarm systems play a big factor here. The automatic alarm, the wire glass window, sprinkler supervisory walls, etc., all come under this, as do the number of hydrants available for use, size of water mains, etc.

The average business man when you first approach him will feel that he has insurance enough to cover his financial loss, but you can show him he is taking a chance and point out what can be done with fire dangers and the saving in insurance premiums and he will be with you in the end.

Safeguarding Against Fire Is Department Work

Safeguarding a building against fire is today fire department work. You know what firemen need as an assistance in putting out a fire. So it is up to you as a fire chief to inform them about the causes of fire and how to remove them. You should understand the planning and construction of buildings and be able to consult the architects and builders so that they will assist you on remodeling and new buildings so that in time you will have safe buildings.

Fireproof Must Be Safe Construction

Fireproof construction means nothing to you if it is not safe construction. I would rather go up against a good safe mill construction than the so-called fireproof building any time and so would you.

Your present buildings need your work, for here lies your danger in the shafts or openings through the floors, such as stairways, elevators, belt holes, pipe channels, ventilating shafts, etc.

The vertical openings are responsible for fire spreading and getting beyond the control of firemen. They can be enclosed or stopped off in a variety of ways, so it is practicable to prevent their acting as fire carriers.

Your roof should be another place for you to watch, and see that all shafts, stairways, etc., have a glass covering, so that proper ventilation can be had in case of fire.

You can do great work and you owe it to yourself and department by making your fire department both a prevention and an extinguishing unit.

The town of Leominster, Mass., has ordered a triple combination motor pumping engine.