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RENO, NEVADA
DIVISION OF GRAZING

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Office of the Secretary
Division of Grazing
Washington

OP
PERSONNEL
Instructions
General

August 10, 1939

I (CCC)
SAFETY

INSTRUCTIONS TO DIVISION OF GRAZING EMPLOYEES.

SUBJECT: Fire Prevention.

The recent appalling tragedy north of Winnemucca, Nevada, causing death to five CCC enrollees who were trapped while fighting a sagebrush and grass fire, should immediately bring home to every Division of Grazing employee the necessity for well-informed personnel and adequate facilities to meet any fire emergency which might occur, not only within territory under the jurisdiction of the Division of Grazing, but to permit cooperative assistance with any other agency whose territory might be endangered. This tragedy might well have involved enrollees attached to Division of Grazing camps for whose safety and welfare the Division of Grazing would have had to answer. Consistent efforts to improve present fire-fighting facilities and procedure must be taken without delay. It is essential that all Division of Grazing personnel become "fire-minded". A greater sense of responsibility must be developed with regard to these boys, many of whom are thousands of miles away from their parents and homes. They are charges of the Government and it is the duty of every Government employee to contribute toward their welfare and protection and assist in every way possible to build worthwhile citizens who will be a credit to the Government that is fostering the CCC movement as well as a pride of the agency taking part in forming their characters. Many of these boys, thousands of miles away from their homes, from different geographical areas, are ignorant of the conditions and dangers with which they are confronted in arid western regions. Their young minds cannot grasp the tragic possibility of a green forest becoming a flaming inferno.

Voluminous instructions have been issued by CCC headquarters covering every phase of preparation, personnel assignment, and facilities to cope with fires. Cooperative agreements have been entered into by regional offices with all other services notably the Forest Service, in their areas, looking toward maximum cooperation with other bureaus and agencies as well as well-trained assistance from such sources when

fires of great magnitude with which the Division of Grazing could not alone cope, are encountered. An inventory must be taken of means and methods now established to determine whether they are adequate to meet this most important phase of our work. Cooperative agreements must be checked and if inadequate they must be revised to cover every possible emergency which might arise. CCC handbooks and regulations must be reviewed and the minds of all Division of Grazing employees refreshed. Adequate fire-fighting equipment must be procured and kept available and in working condition at all times.

The human element must not be incidental in this work. Loss of human lives is a greater tragedy than loss of property. We must not forget that even though we have a well-mapped procedure and adequate equipment, the man-power is a most important factor in fire-fighting without which the entire program would fail. In our zeal to conserve the natural resources we have no doubt been apt to overlook the importance of adequate precautions for the preservation of human lives. Our fire-fighting forces must be fully trained, not only as to regulations, but by actual effective instructions when to advance, how to meet the problem, and when and how to retreat, under emergencies.

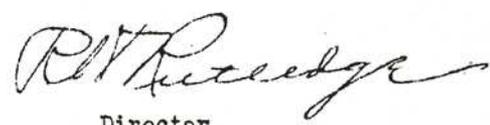
The important factor of physical fitness and the welfare of men sent to fight fires has been given only secondary consideration so far. No lives must ever be lost because of negligence or lack of adequate precautions and foresight on the part of the Division of Grazing.

Director Fechner recently has amended the safety regulations of the CCC to provide for a course in safety precaution to be observed in fighting fires. He has ordered that no foreman or enrollee is to be allowed to fight fires without previous fire-fighting instructions. He further ordered that no enrollee under 18 years of age is to be selected for fire-fighting duty unless he is mentally, physically, and by experience, deemed equal to one of that age. The regulations must be observed.

The Winnemucca fire incident has brought home to us the necessity for the inauguration of some system to determine the physical fitness of men and enrollees sent on fire-fighting duty. No man, not functionally in good condition as to sight, lungs, heart, and other organisms, particularly taxed in this work, should be selected. It is my desire that regional graziers and camp superintendents take up this problem immediately with their respective Company Commanders, District Commanders, and Liaison Officers, looking toward some system whereby physical examination could be given to test physical fitness of enrollees and men assigned to this work.

It has been suggested that the boys and men might participate in a mock fire at which their physical fitness would be taxed to the same extent as would be required in a real fire. They should be examined previous to the mock fire and rechecked immediately upon their return from the test. Some sort of certificate of physical fitness for this purpose might be issued which might serve as a device for morale building.

This problem, looking toward further amendment of the safety regulations, CCC, is being taken up with the Department Representative, Advisory Council, CCC, for presentation to Director Fechner, CCC.



Director.