

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FIRE PREVENTION

For more than a decade the loss of property in the United States due to fires has been steadily mounting year by year. During this period an average of 10,000 persons have been burned to death or have died of burns annually. In the first nine months of this year fire losses reached the total of nearly half a billion dollars, with the prospect that final reports for 1946 will show this year to have been the most disastrous in our history with respect to fire losses.

Additional millions must be added to the nation's bill because of forest fires which, in 1945, accounted for the destruction of more than 26 million dollars worth of timber, a precious national resource. Also must be added the enormous sums spent in fighting and controlling fires.

This terrible destruction of lives and property could have been almost entirely averted if proper precautions had been taken in time. Destructive fires are due to carelessness or to ignorance of the proper methods of prevention. These techniques have been tested, but they must be much more intensively applied in every State and local community in the country.

The President has, therefore, decide to call a National Conference on Fire Prevention, to be held in Washington within the next few months, to bring the ever-present danger from fire home to all our people, and to devise additional methods to intensify the work of fire prevention in every town and city in the Nation.

He has appointed Major General Philip B. Fleming, Administrator of the Federal Works Agency and of the Office of Temporary Controls, to serve as general chairman of the conference. General Fleming, who served in a similar capacity during the President's Conference on Highway Safety last May, already is at work on preliminary arrangements for the meeting, to which will be invited State and local officials who have legal responsibilities in the matter of fire prevention and control, and representatives of non-official organizations working in this field.

The new impetus given to the prevention of traffic fatalities by the Highway Safety Conference already has resulted in saving several thousand lives, and the benefits will continue to be felt as the techniques adopted by the conference are increasingly applied. The President is encouraged to hope, therefore, that a similar attack on fire losses will yield corresponding benefits.

Indeed, that the taking of proper precautions can stem this staggering drain on our resources is well illustrated in our experience with the Nation's forests. Although the acreage of our unprotected forest lands amounts to only 25% of the acreage of our protected forests, the losses of the former in 1945 exceeded those of the protected tracts by more than 20%.

The President said: "I can think of no more fitting memorial to those who died needlessly this year in the LaSalle Hotel fire in Chicago, the appalling disaster at the Wincoff Hotel in Atlanta, and the more recent New York tenement holocaust than that we should dedicate ourselves anew to ceaseless war upon the fire menace."