

The Story of Fresno

A Tale of the Redemption
of a Fire Department

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National Fire Protection Association

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The Story of Fresno.

A Tale of the Redemption of a Fire Department.

Fresno is a pleasant city of California reposing in the fertile San Joaquin Valley. As a fruit raising district this valley has few equals and when irrigation plans were developed Fresno began to grow. The valley trade centralized here and warehousing and packing plants multiplied. In 1900 the population was 12,000; in 1920 it was 45,000, and it now approaches 90,000. Fresno's industrial output in the census year of 1919 was valued at \$48,944,000. Naturally Fresno has had things to burn and up to 1923 was burning them, quite regardless. Here are the figures:

| | Total Loss | Loss per capita | Fire Alarms |
|------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1918 | \$514,747 | \$10.72 | 294 |
| 1919 | 781,938 | 15.64 | 459 |
| 1920 | 505,292 | 10.10 | 363 |
| 1921 | 1,840,562 | 33.46 | 485 |
| 1922 | 558,947 | 10.54 | 450 |
| 1923 | 187,565 | 2.21 | 279 |
| 1924 | 259,823 | 2.98 | 250 |

The year 1924 would have made an improved showing were it not for one fire of \$138,000, starting in a packing plant the hazards of which were well known and respecting which court action was contemplated.

While several American cities have indefensible fire records, Fresno led them all in average delinquency for the first five years recorded in the above table. Fresno is not without some excuse. When a city grows with such rapidity land values are not yet stabilized and so builders are generally timid and building construction is poor. Given this basic condition; add to it public indifference and poor housekeeping, and destructive fires are the logical result. The underwriters stood the terrific strain of these conflagration years, all of them losing money, until it was obviously imperative that Fresno's reckless burnings must be challenged. When 1920 contributed its sorry figures the insurance rate of the city was increased 25%. This produced the reactions that invariably follow a shock to the pocket nerve. There was political "yapping" and considerable business discontent. The influential citizens, however, had the sense to see that Fresno was bleeding her sister-cities white and that she deserved the twenty-five per cent infliction. A dozen of them got together for a confidential discussion of the matter and wondered who could tell them what to do.

In San Francisco there was Jay Stevens, one time assistant chief of the Portland, Oregon, fire department, now chief of fire prevention on the Pacific Coast for the National Board of Fire Underwriters. Mr. Stevens is also state fire marshal of California, Secretary of the Pacific Coast Association of Fire Chiefs, and Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Fire Department Cooperation of the National Fire Protection Association. The only reason he hasn't a lot of other offices is because there are only twenty-four hours in his working day. Some time before this Mr. Stevens had spoken before the Lions Club and several Fresno people had got the notion that he had said something. The citizens' committee sent for him to come to Fresno to a meeting on a certain night when every man was pledged to be present. Mr. Stevens was detained beyond train time in San Francisco but telephoned that he would come by motor if they would wait for him until nine o'clock. "We shall be waiting for you if it is midnight," they said. They waited until one o'clock but Mr. Stevens did not appear. He was lying unconscious beside the San Francisco highway under his overturned automobile. For over a year his courageous spirit contended with his torn flesh and broken bones. He finally left the hospital and limped back to his office. The nurses had told him that in his delirium he was hurrying to Fresno and he replied that he'd get there yet.

The Fresno citizens were not idle. They conferred with the water company and secured extended and better service; they stimulated the new city commissioners to get more fire apparatus and houses to install it, to build a drill tower, and to create an inspection bureau in the fire department; but the bad losses continued. Something was the matter. As is always the case where fires from carelessness are frequent many were deliberately set. The Commissioners picked a good man from the fire department, Captain Ralph Williams, and made him fire marshal. Captain Williams' energy not only put fear into the hearts of the fire-bugs, but expressed itself in fire prevention activities, educational and other. But the fires kept burning. It was October, 1922, a year and a half since the night the citizens sat waiting for Mr. Stevens, and in that year and a half the losses had aggregated \$2,000,000. In the light of subsequent events it seems as if that was what Mr. Stevens' auto wreck cost Fresno. Captain Williams staged a fire prevention campaign in October, 1922, and solicited Mr. Stevens' help. Mr. Stevens responded. He had been quietly studying Fresno and thought he knew what the trouble was. He made a speech at the luncheon of the Rotary Club and declared the citizens had done all they could; that the fault lay not with them but with the fire department; that the fire department was a rotten stick on which the city could not safely lean. The chief of the fire department was at the luncheon.

It is the habit of cities to idealize their fire chiefs, and because of this the acts of these public servants often escape the scrutiny that might reveal their shortcomings. Because the American people have not yet recognized the supreme importance of this office they have not demanded in it the degree of intelligence and ability they should demand. Mr. Stevens' experience had taught him what an efficient fire department was. His declaration set Fresno buzzing. The mayor was out of town but returned post-haste, called a conference of his officials, and sent for Mr. Stevens. The mayor informed him that he had heard of his talks before the clubs and that he had been quoted in the press as saying the Fresno fire department was in a rotten condition. He wanted to know if these were facts. Mr. Stevens replied that they were. The mayor asked him if he had actually made the statement that the fire department was rotten. "Yes," Mr. Stevens replied. "Do you think the fire department is as bad as that?" asked the mayor. "Worse!" replied Mr. Stevens. "I cannot find words to describe the actual conditions." The mayor asked why Mr. Stevens had not told him about the conditions. Mr. Stevens replied it was because he was not in the city. "There were others you could have gone to in my absence," said the mayor. Mr. Stevens stated he had gone to others in his absence. "To whom?" His Honor inquired. "To the chairman of the fire commission," replied Mr. Stevens. The mayor turned to the chairman and asked him if Mr. Stevens had talked with him and told him the things he was quoted in the newspapers as saying. "Yes, sir," replied the chairman, "and much more." "Have you talked to any other members of the fire commission?" asked the mayor. "To one other, who is present," replied Mr. Stevens.

The mayor asked the commissioners how they felt about these statements and one arose and said it was hard to believe the fire department was in the terrible condition the speaker had maintained. Turning then to Mr. Stevens the mayor said, "Chief Stevens, we all feel pretty much the same way here. We have been doing a lot of work in connection with our fire department, spending money improving it. We have confidence in our fire department; we think it is all right. We don't feel as you do about our fire department being rotten, and we demand that you either prove your statements or move on—get out of town." Mr. Stevens stated that he expected to be asked to prove his statements, had made them with that thought in mind, and was ready to start in. "When?" asked the mayor. "Will tomorrow morning be too soon?" asked Mr. Stevens. The mayor: "No!" Mr. Stevens: "Where?" The mayor: "Here in my office."

On being asked who should be present, Mr. Stevens left it to the mayor, merely advising that the press and public should be excluded.

leaving the mayor free to give out such information as he chose after the meeting. "You have witnesses?" asked the mayor. "Yes," said Mr. Stevens. "I shall call them in the morning."

The investigation, at which were present the mayor, city commissioners, fire commissioners and a court reporter, began at 9 o'clock the following morning and continued until 12:30 midnight. It was adjourned until 8:30 the second morning and closed at 11 o'clock that night. The tale is an absorbing one; one of human delinquency, insubordination, incompetence, and bewildering disorganization, dramatic and disconcerting; too personal in character to relate without injustice to some who were caught in it without being wholly culpable. At the close of the meeting one of the commissioners arose, stating he had something to say.

"Mr. Mayor," he said, "I am in a little different position from the rest of you. I didn't know this gentleman before meeting him in your office the day before yesterday. I did not hear him talk on his previous visits; so when I read in the morning papers that he was making derogatory statements about our fire department I was very much displeased and said to myself, 'He is just another attempting to throw dust in our eyes and justify our high insurance rates,' and I certainly was in sympathy with you when you told him here at the meeting that he must prove his statements or get out. At this time I want to apologize to Mr. Stevens for having such thoughts, for if ever a man has proven his statements, he has, and personally I am in favor of a new regime in the fire department from the head down. I am ready to vote for the appointment of any man that Mr. Stevens will name to head this department and straighten it out. I will vote for a Chinaman if he proposes one."

Mr. Stevens arose and said, "Gentlemen, I feel I have finished my labors here. If I have proven to your satisfaction that conditions are as I stated I am ready to take the midnight train for San Francisco. I have much other work to do."

"No," said the mayor. "You have not finished here yet. It is now up to you to assist us in getting a new chief and in the reorganization of our fire department, which you have demonstrated to my complete satisfaction is absolutely necessary."

It had been made clear that the bad conditions in the fire department were due to lack of discipline, general insubordination, and incompetence of the officers. The chief pleaded for another chance, saying that he knew conditions were bad but not as bad as Mr. Stevens' investigation had revealed.

Mr. Stevens: Why didn't you know of these conditions which I have exposed?

The chief: Because I didn't have the opportunity of finding them

out-that you have had. You have a different method of going about it.

Mr. Stevens stated that the chief had been there for many years, whereas he had been there only a few days.

The mayor asked Mr. Stevens if he thought the chief ought to be given another chance, but the latter replied very emphatically that he was opposed to the chief being given another opportunity; that he had had several opportunities. Mr. Stevens asked the chief if he had not been called before Mayor Hart at the time of the mayor's taking office two years previous and told that he must straighten out the department and put it on an efficient basis. He replied that he had been called before the mayor. Mr. Stevens then asked him why he had not carried out the mayor's orders. He replied because he did not know that the mayor meant what he said.

"What is that?" inquired the mayor.

The chief: That is right, mayor, I didn't know whether you meant it or not.

The mayor: - You will find out now whether I meant it or not.

Mr. Stevens then asked the chief: "Suppose the mayor should decide to give you another chance and asked you to start in right now with your reorganization, just what would you do—what would be your first move in reorganizing the department?"

The chief: I would discharge every man who has been implicated in any way with the mis-handling of this department.

Mr. Stevens: That would remove 90% of your 140 men.

The chief: As many as that?

Mr. Stevens: Yes. How would you fight fires?

The chief: I couldn't with such a force.

Mr. Stevens: What then would you do?

The chief: I don't know.

After the chief left the room one of the commissioners asked Mr. Stevens, "Just what would you do?"

"Do nothing," replied Mr. Stevens, "so far as discharging the men is concerned. The men in most cases did trivial things for which they were not responsible due to the laxity of the officers. In the major offences the same thing is true, although some of them should be discharged. It is hard to say just which ones should. I believe that all of them below the rank of assistant chief should be given an opportunity to make good. The thing you need to do is to try them out under new influences."

Mr. Stevens' counsel was heeded by the commissioners. The first assistant chief was pensioned for disability resulting from injuries received in the line of duty. The second assistant chief was discharged. The chief was demoted to second assistant chief. The chief's sins had

been sins of omission, and for this reason the commissioners finally decided that he should hold office as assistant chief, as he would work well under the direction of a forceful and competent man.

A forceful and competent man was found in southern California. He was Thomas Baird, formerly first assistant chief at Fresno, who had removed to Los Angeles. He was asked to return to Fresno and tackle a man's job. He consented. His accomplishment in mere dollars and cents is recorded in the fire loss statistics for the years of 1923 and 1924 given above. "We can never," said Jay Stevens, in discussing recently the Fresno situation, "give too much credit to Chief Baird for his accomplishments in reorganizing the department, installing modern methods of fire fighting and fire drills, generally systematizing the work of the department and perfecting its fire prevention activities." Mr. Stevens said it would be impossible to find a man who could have done better than Chief Baird and it would be mighty hard to find his equal. Chief Baird had the imagination to see the value of an informed public opinion, and encouraged the perfecting of a non-political citizens' fire prevention committee to operate as his advisory cabinet through whom he might transmit to the people of Fresno a knowledge of the fire department problems which the people themselves might, by their cooperation, help him to solve. He declares that this committee has been, and yet is, of inestimable value to him. "The organization of such a group," says Fire Chief George L. Johnson of Waltham, Mass., "is no good for the political fire chief; but for the people's fire chief it is wonderful."

With the gentlemen of the city commission standing loyally behind him and the fire prevention committee ready at all times to make his policies publicly understood, Chief Baird successfully secured the cooperation of the people of Fresno in redeeming their city. The activities of the present fire department embody a program one generally expects to find only in the department of a very large city. The general upheaval which the complete reorganization of the fire department occasioned further stressed the importance of improving also the water distributing system, which has since been very markedly improved. The water company officials were called before the fire commission and in joint meeting the entire matter was gone over. It was admitted that the water situation in Fresno was not satisfactory, and while no legal action was considered desirable, or as a matter of fact, possible, the water company officials agreed to plan and carry out an extensive campaign for the improvement of the water situation locally and the officials of the water company have more than complied with the pledge made to the fire commission at the time of the meeting.

The complete details of the campaign to make Fresno fire safe cannot

be recited in the space allotted to this article. The first work undertaken by Chief Baird in the fire department was an attempt to analyze conditions and formulate a plan for readjustment which would insure a correction in all directions of the deplorable conditions which existed. The first actual move was to appoint a physical instructor and drill master. This man was given complete charge of the physical training and drilling of the department members, the drill school was reconstructed, reorganized and equipped so that it is now one of the best equipped drill schools in the West. The man who was appointed drill master, Captain J. M. Dagherty, was in due time sent to New York where he took the New York Fire Department College course in the spring of 1923.

Every effort was made to stimulate the loyalty and cooperation of the members of the department, and the Fresno department now stands in a class by itself, with reference to the morale and loyalty of its members.

Approximately \$100,000 was spent during the early part of 1923 in buying new major apparatus. One new engine house was built in the packing house district. Approximately \$40,000 was spent in remodeling and rebuilding Engine House No. 2, and here fire department headquarters and headquarters of the fire prevention bureau are now located. A new three-story re-enforced concrete addition was added to this building and in the third story are the night quarters of the chief. A complete new fire alarm system was installed with its central office in a location protected from conflagration attack.

A large amount of minor equipment in the way of smoke helmets, nozzles, forcible entry tools, additional salvage covers and so on was purchased, and a standard winter and summer uniform was adopted so that the members are now able to purchase a winter uniform for around \$42.00 which gives them infinitely better service than the uniform which they were formerly able to purchase at random at from \$60.00 to \$65.00.

An educational campaign was inaugurated in the department with the idea of teaching the members something about their jobs. It is compulsory for each company commander on each platoon to hold two schools in company quarters each week. One of these schools is given over to first aid work, study of the rules and regulations, building construction, hydraulics, hazardous buildings, streets, hydrants, etc. The other is confined to house training with the equipment on the apparatus, discussion of such equipment, its location on the apparatus, its name, its use and misuse. Then the district chiefs of each platoon and district assemble the company commanders at district headquarters once each week where a school is conducted on hydraulics, chemistry, ventilation, and other phases of modern fire control. Once each month all of the officers on each platoon are brought to department headquarters, where a school is conducted by the

chief on these and related subjects. On each Wednesday afternoon all of the chief officers of the department meet at headquarters for the review and conduct of department business. On each Thursday afternoon the chief officers meet at headquarters for a normal school in all methods pertaining to fire control. The Bureau of Mines rescue squad has made several lengthy visits to Fresno for the purpose of thoroughly drilling the fire department officers and members in first aid and rescue work.

In addition to the training above indicated every member of the department was given a thirty-day course at the drill school, and those who graduated have been awarded appropriate diplomas. Every new member coming into the department must take a thirty-day course at the drill school before he is certified for appointment, or permitted to be assigned to a company. Fresno's drill school or fire college has been pretty well recognized in the West and a number of prospective drill masters from outside departments have taken the drill course and graduated therefrom. This will indicate the splendid educational work and schooling which is carried on in the department as a matter of regular routine.

In addition to all the work which has been done in the fire department proper, an intensive fire prevention campaign was inaugurated at the time of the reorganization of the department and the results of this campaign are self-evident when the reduction in fire losses is considered, and particularly the reduction in the number of alarms received. During the year 1923 some 48,000 inspections were made by the fire prevention bureau members of the fire department. In 1924, 58,000 inspections were made. One hundred and fourteen buildings of various types and construction were condemned, demolished and removed in 1923, and 117 in 1924. Some 87 public fire prevention meetings were held and addresses given in each case not only by members of the department, but by chiefs and officials from other cities. Talks are made to luncheon clubs, fraternal organizations, churches, corporations and organizations of like nature on occasion. On January 24, 1923, a public fire prevention mass meeting was held in the Civic Auditorium, which was attended by some 4,000 people. This public mass meeting was held again on January 23, 1924, and it is planned to make this an annual affair with different programs each year.

While Fresno was suffering from the low morale reflected in the constant burnings from carelessness, the firebug naturally found his opportunity. Arson was rampant. During 1921-22 there were three arrests made for arson, but the officers were unable to get convictions owing to the lack of interest of the public as jurors and inability to understand how difficult it was to secure evidence in these cases.

Immediately there was started a campaign through the public press

to educate the people as to their duty as jurors in cases of arson, and to the important part arson had played in Fresno's tremendous fire loss. This campaign showed the results in the next few cases that were tried before the court.

When Captain Williams was made fire marshal, he investigated the cause of every fire and published the result. No better educational work than this could be done. To Captain Williams belongs the credit for driving the firebugs from Fresno. Whenever he discovered evidences of over-insurance he took the matter up directly with the fire insurance companies issuing the indemnity, the effect of which was to stimulate the local insurance agents to greater care in the writing of policies. The local insurance agents cooperated loyally in the general fire-safety campaign. They reflected great credit upon their business in Fresno.

During the year and a half period ending June 30, 1924, there were 22 arrests for arson and 18 convictions. Most of the people convicted are now serving terms in San Quentin prison. In the minor cases, particularly where children were involved, probation was extended by the Juvenile Court. The activities of the fire prevention bureau along these lines and the results obtained have brought the number of suspicious fires down to an absolute minimum and demonstrated how quickly when once the fire prevention consciousness takes possession of a city the fire bug is eliminated from the problem.

A striking accomplishment of the reorganized Fresno fire department is the emphasis placed upon saving property from water damage, which Chief Baird considers as logical a fire department service as fire extinguishment. Salvage work was first undertaken by the department in 1922-23 and has since been enlarged upon and developed to a high degree of efficiency. While Captain J. J. Conway of Cincinnati, the dean of the fire patrol officers in America, was in Los Angeles for the purpose of instructing the proposed Los Angeles fire department salvage corps, he was requested to visit Fresno for the purpose of inspecting and training the men in salvage work. He appeared at the drill tower and at his request a company was sent for to illustrate the salvage and covering work as practiced in the Fresno department. On their arrival Captain Conway took charge and the result of the work was so satisfactory as to warrant Captain Conway in stating that there was no necessity for his remaining, as the work was being carried on in accordance with standard and modern practice, and that all that was necessary to complete the training of the Fresno men was practical experience.

Intensive training in all angles of salvage work is carried out through every branch of service in the department, and included in the standard equipment of each piece of apparatus are as many salvage covers as can

be conveniently carried. The squad company carries 21 covers, the truck companies 20 covers each, chemical companies and engine companies from four to six covers each.

The introduction of smoke helmets has within the last year and a half saved the city thousands of dollars in fire losses because of the fact that on a number of occasions the chief was able to send a helmet squad into basements and other places where the smoke and fumes were too dense to permit the entry of an unprotected fireman. In this way the origin of the blaze has been discovered and the fire handled with a minimum amount of damage.

An outstanding demonstration of the value of the salvage work of the Fresno department was, however, given at the Seventh Day Adventist Church fire which occurred on December 8, 1923. The interesting feature of this fire is the fact that while the roof and belfry tower were completely demolished, not one dollar's worth of property was damaged under the ceiling line either as a result of fire or water. The squad company covered everything in the church completely, with the result that no water damage was done to the pipe organ, furniture, piano or library. This has been considered by interested officials one of the most striking examples of the possibilities of proper salvage work which has been given anywhere during recent years.

Besides the salvage work is the work of the rescue squad, well drilled in first-aid evolutions and life-saving tactics. The rescue squad wagon was designed, constructed and equipped in the fire department's own shop and carries over 300 pieces of equipment. Four lives have already been saved by this squad since its organization. The building of this squad wagon is not the only accomplishment of the mechanics in the department. A double 80-gallon truck with 40-gallon auxiliary chemical engine was constructed and equipped in every detail in the fire department shop. This apparatus as it now stands cost the fire department something less than \$2,200, while new factory-built apparatus equipped as this one is equipped would cost in the neighborhood of \$9,000.

It goes without saying that the work of the fire department in public education in cooperation with the citizens' fire prevention committee has been up to the standard of any part of the country. Beside the constant daily inspections of the uniformed firemen in the business district, the annual one-day inspection is made of every building in the city. This one-day inspection is preceded by wide advertising in the newspapers, talks at the various luncheon clubs, fraternal organizations, churches, etc. It results in the inspecting force finding the city practically free from rubbish and other hazardous conditions on the day on which the inspection is made.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that Fresno should have won the silver trophy offered by the late Thomas H. Ince, motion picture magnate, to the city on the Pacific coast making the best fire prevention record. Mr. Ince was greatly interested in the Pacific Coast Association of Fire Chiefs, of which he was an honorary member, and the trophy, a mammoth silver cup, was received by Chief Baird on behalf of Fresno, and the convention of the association at Pasadena in August 1924.

The fire department under Chief Baird has won the most grateful regard of the Fresno people for its work in the schools. Chief Baird regards the safety of school children and hospital patients as his especial responsibility. There is one fire department inspector who does nothing during the school period but inspect schools and work with the school children. The schools are all given two drills each month and each school is assembled at least once each month and given a short talk on some particular subject of fire prevention. During the last Fire Prevention Week the different schools held contests on both fire prevention essays and posters.

At each time the children are assembled in the yard or assembly room, a fire alarm box mounted on a board is demonstrated and the proper method of sending in a fire alarm is explained together with the proper method of sending in an alarm over the telephone. In these fire drills at the schools certain pupils of each room are designated to see that all doors are opened upon the sound of the fire alarm, also to see that all pupils are clear, and the doors then closed. They are also instructed in the proper method of operating the hand fire extinguishing agencies in the school.

Structural changes have been made in the high school auditorium, and the basement and stage sections equipped with sprinklers. Similar improvements have been secured in the county hospital and old people's home. The safeguarding of these public buildings against loss of life and property by fire is the direct result of a forceful and competent fire chief moving for such conditions. The Board of Education keeps step with the fire chief in all his ideas and efforts for the safety of the children. What Chief Baird thinks about the responsibilities of the janitors of public school buildings is reflected in the following letter from the Board of Education:

Chief, Fresno Fire Department,
City Hall,
Fresno, Calif.

Dear Sir:

At a regular meeting of the Board of Education, held on June 12, 1924, the Board of Education of the City of Fresno Schools adopted the following ruling to be known as Section No. 8.

"All janitors employed by the Board of Education of the City of Fresno Schools shall be required to take a course in Fire Prevention outlined by the Fire Prevention Bureau of the Fresno Fire Department. On or about the first of February each year, the Secretary of the Board shall arrange for a written examination to be given all janitors who have not a certificate showing that they have successfully completed this course; such certificate should be issued upon the recommendation of the Fire Prevention Bureau of the Fresno Fire Department, after such examination as may be prepared by this Bureau, subject to the approval of the Superintendent of Schools."

Naturally the laws and ordinances of the city governing fire hazards have come up for review in this tremendous awakening of Fresno. The new penal ordinance passed during 1923-24 is a great improvement over the old ordinance, particularly with reference to fire prevention legislation, as under the new ordinance it is a misdemeanor for a property owner, agent or tenant to allow the accumulation of rubbish, or other material designated as a fire hazard. Under the new ordinance the usual two 'days' notice for removal is not required, but, instead, the mere presence of the hazard is a misdemeanor and warrants immediate arrest if the Bureau so desires. This has been a great help in promoting good general housekeeping. An oil storage ordinance and an ordinary governing theatre construction and operation have been adopted and a new building code has been introduced for passage with high hopes for early adoption. The county officials have helped the city by enacting an ordinance prohibiting the storage, sale, or discharge of fireworks within one-half mile of the city limits; also an ordinance requiring property owners to clean all grass and rubbish from their premises within the same area.

By all odds, however, the legislation in which Fresno is in the van of progress is that relating to the installation of automatic sprinklers. Following are the principal features of the sprinkler ordinance:

SEC. 2. The basement of every building other than private dwellings, after the passing of this ordinance, shall be equipped with an approved automatic sprinkler system. Before a building permit is issued for any such building, plans and specifications for the same shall be submitted to the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department. . . . The building permit for such building shall not be issued by the building inspector until such plans and specifications have been approved by the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department.

SEC. 3. No building hereafter erected in which a sprinkler system is required by the terms of this ordinance shall be occupied for any purpose until such sprinkler system is completely installed and in an operative condition.

SEC. 5. Every building (where the cost thereof shall exceed \$2,000) erected, altered or reconstructed in whole or in part after the passage of this ordinance, used or intended to be used as a Planing Mill, Warehouse, Department Store, Furniture Store, Packing House, Paint Store or painting establishment, shall be equipped in addition to the basement, in every room or rooms, occupied by the hereinbefore mentioned occupancies, with an approved automatic sprinkler system. (There has been trouble with the ordinance on account of this section and it is proposed to raise the alteration exemption from \$2000 to \$5000.)

SEC. 6. The automatic sprinkler system shall comply with the requirements of the National Board of Fire Underwriters of 1922, provided, however, that a single water supply of a nature and capacity satisfactory to the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department shall be accepted as a minimum compliance with the ordinance, but in no case shall the supply pipes be less than four inches in diameter. A sprinkler shall not be required in safety deposit vaults used for the storage of records which would be subject to material water damage. In basements having an area of less than four hundred square feet, the supply pipe may be reduced to two inches.

SEC. 7. Violation of the ordinance is a misdemeanor. (Each and every day's violation constitutes a separate violation.)

Year after year through the payment of her excessive fire losses by the insurance companies, Fresno had mulcted her more prudent sister cities, from whom the premiums to pay these losses were collected. As a matter of social and economic justice no reduction in insurance rates should have been granted until Fresno had paid into the insurance fund of the nation the sums her years of indifference had taken from it. But no human-being could desire to punish Fresno in the light of her social awakening of 1923-24, nor withhold the meed of admiration for the physical and educational accomplishment of these years. "Our activity," writes Chief Baird, "has never diminished since the reorganization of the fire department in November, 1922. We believe that practically 100% of the population of Fresno now realizes that in their own hands lies the solution of the fire prevention problem. They realize that they are well repaid when they keep their homes and places of business free from rubbish and other hazardous conditions; and they realize that this requires, usually, the expenditure of no money, but on the contrary, simply the exercise of ordinary common sense, coupled with a few moments' effort each day." Chief Baird dramatizes Fresno's accomplishment before her own people by compelling their attention to the following figures: For the five years from 1918 to 1922 inclusive, the average annual fire loss was \$850,279. The average loss per fire for this period was \$1,967. The average per capita loss was \$16.13; while the average number of yearly alarms was something around 450. In 1923 the fire loss was \$187,565, the loss per fire was \$560, the per capita loss was \$2.21, and the alarms had been reduced to 279. The fire department budget for the fiscal year 1923-24 was \$404,620.05, and for 1922-23, the year prior to the reorganization, it was \$367,640. Over against this expense array the tremendous reduction in fire losses following the new era of the department and the direct saving of \$375,000 per year to the citizens of Fresno by reduced insurance rates, and the fire department appears as a self-sustaining proposition. In the residence sections the rates have been reduced from approximately \$2.55 per hundred to a flat rate of \$1 per hundred. In the mercantile district there has been a total reduction of some 35% on buildings and contents.

A contemplation of the mere facts of this story of Fresno projects before the mind a revised idea of the qualifications of the American fire department. The old political, pompous, water-throwing, sentimentally-regarded fire chief, hiding his ignorance and incompetence behind the shriek of sirens and clanging of bells, disappears from the picture and there emerges a quiet, intelligent, forceful, modest business man like Thomas Baird, who might with equal competence be administering a factory or directing a sales organization. There is no monstrous mystery about fire extinguishment or fire prevention; it simply requires the application of the same kind of intelligence that can successfully manufacture and sell soap; and some day when the economic significance of the fire waste is apprehended no American city will consent to leave its fire safety in the hands of a man no business organization would employ. Fresno in 1922 was as impossible from a fire hazard viewpoint as a city could be. Its delinquency had become a complacent habit. It needed, to awaken it, the dash of cold water from outside that many another American city needs. The service courageously and intelligently rendered Fresno by Jay Stevens liberated the local enthusiasms that have redeemed this Western city from her low estate. What one city may do another may do. There needs but the same sort of awakening to bring a similar rich fulfillment in prosperity and civic honor.