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**FOOD CONSERVATION
AND FIRE WASTE**

**What The Preservation of
Food Supplies Means
to The U. S.**

Anyone with average powers of observation who travels at the present time over any portion of the Pacific Coast, will note young men clad in the now familiar khaki uniform, with rifles over their shoulders, watching the approaches to every bridge and tunnel of any importance or strategic value. These troops are on duty day and night for the purpose of safeguarding the Nation's railway communications, so important in the present crisis. The same precaution will also be seen at all prominent shipbuilding and manufacturing plants which are working in the interests of the United States. All of these steps are taken to prevent any interruption in the campaign of preparedness in which the country is engaged in the meeting the stern issues of the war.

The guarding of these various premises has been brought about through the National Board of Defense, which has also under consideration the thorough extension of this system of protection to all warehouses and other depots where the food supplies of the country are kept in storage. Many of these warehouses, however, particularly in the States of Washington, Oregon and Idaho, are situated at isolated points, and as the National Board and various State Councils of Defense cannot perfect plans for the guarding of these premises, it becomes the patriotic duty of every American citizen to lend his aid and to "do his bit" towards rendering the food supplies in his neighborhood immune from danger.

Fire Waste and Fuel Supplies.

One of the great problems presented to the Board of National Defense in the care and preservation of the food supplies of the United States is the fact that the fire waste of this country is so greatly in excess of that of any other nation. Statistics covering a 20-year period conclusively show that the per capita fire cost in the United States is over seven times that of the nation with which we are at present engaged in war, and that to every man, woman and child in this country there is a tax of \$2.51 each year as compared with a per capita cost of only 35 cents in Germany. The statement has been made, and it remains incapable of successful contradiction, that if the same wastage by fire existed in Germany as in this country, the consequent loss and destruction of food supplies would have been so great that Germany long since would have been compelled to sue for peace.

With this fact before us, it is easy to realize that unless we change our methods and overcome our habits of carelessness this great Nation faces the serious danger of defeat through a fault which common sense and caution on the part of each individual citizen could easily prevent.

Pacific Coast Especially Favored.

Nature has been peculiarly kind to those who reside on this Coast. We have few adverse weather conditions to contend with, and all our people live under such comparatively easy and favorable surroundings as to beget habits of carelessness and indifference towards the ordinary hazards of fire. Under normal conditions these habits might be fraught with a danger easily ignored and with few results of vital significance, but in the present crisis and need for the preservation of all food supplies, these same habits of carelessness and indifference can quickly assume the importance of a National catastrophe.

That Federal and State officials are beginning to realize the magnitude of this danger is evidenced by the fact that in many of the States a special course of education is being given to the school children by fire prevention experts, who point out the dangers resulting from the careless handling of matches, the accumulation of litter and rubbish in basements, woodhouses, attics and storerooms, lack of care in the use of coal oil and gasoline, the hanging of electric cords over nails, and the numerous other habits of carelessness that almost universally prevail in every household. Even one of the school superintendents had the need of cleanliness forcibly brought to his attention by his young daughters who had listened to a lecture on fire prevention at the afternoon session of the school and who took him down into their basement and stood watch over him while he cleaned up the rubbish which he had carelessly allowed to accumulate, while a perfect wave of chimney cleaning swept over one of the cities of the State caused by a statement to the school children that their "houses were in danger of catching fire if the chimneys had not been cleaned within a year."

The Farmer's Responsibility.

Above practically all other occupations, the eyes of the Nation turn towards the farmer, the great producer of food supplies, and to the farmer and fruit grower the necessity is urgent of using every means to protect and preserve their products. It is a serious misfortune, from the personal point of view, to see the fruits of years of labor swept away by fire, but when to this is coupled the greater and more dominant loss to the country in the destruction of food supplies, the responsibility of taking every precaution against fire becomes doubly imperative. In the great grain growing section of the Pacific States the menace of fire

during the summer time always exists and this menace is intensified in the majority of rural districts by the absence of regular fire departments and other fire fighting organizations. The farmer, therefore, is necessarily thrown upon his own resources for the means of preservation, and upon him rests the double responsibility of first eliminating all possible fire hazards and also of having fire extinguishing apparatus ready for immediate use should a fire occur.

Precautions Against Fire.

Dry grass along the roadsides and in the pasture fields is a serious menace to a ripe crop of grain. A spark from a match or passing train or emitted from the exhaust of an automobile engine, or a lighted cigarette or cigar stub thrown carelessly aside, can easily start a fire which, with surroundings favoring its spreading, will result in incalculable loss and destroy a quantity of grain sufficient to furnish an entire community with food. Where conditions permit, furrows should be plowed between the grass and the grain. If this is not possible, the grass should be mowed close enough to afford a check to the spreading of fire.

A New Hazard.

A comparatively new danger to grain fields is white-hot carbon discharged from the exhausts of tractors when pulling up-hill or through a heavy part of the crop. Every exhaust should be protected by a fine wire screen, which should be renewed at least once a month, as the heat becomes so intense as to quickly destroy its effectiveness. When the grain has been threshed and piled in the field, it should be protected by a sufficient number of furrows to prevent its destruction from the burning of stubble.

Danger From Threshers.

The time of one of the great dangers to grain and grain fields in the Northwest is during the threshing season and is caused by careless methods in threshing and piling the threshed grain too near to the straw stacks. Every threshing machine by the very reason of its operations collects a certain amount of smut or dust, which is highly inflammable and subject to explosion, and the farmer should insist that before a threshing machine commences operations on his settings the machine be thoroughly cleaned out, flues examined and water tanks kept full. If possible, the straw stacks should be removed every night, but where this is not possible then under no circumstances should the threshed grain be piled so close to the thresher or the straw stacks that the burning of either would endanger the grain. Every threshing machine owner or operator should be required to have a good sized chemical tank with its equipment to immediately extinguish small fires.

If not sufficiently cured, and whether baled or loose, hay will generate gases which are susceptible of spontaneous combustion unless the barn is sufficiently ventilated to carry off these gases. Every particle of dry grass and all litter and rubbish should be removed from barnyards and from all buildings on the farm. Under no circumstances should smoking or the use of matches be permitted around barn buildings, while candles or any other open flame should be strictly prohibited and only closed lanterns or electric pocket flashlights allowed in or around barns carrying any quantity of hay.

Fighting Fires.

The great difference between the trained fire department and the volunteer organization is the fact that an experienced fireman knows exactly what to do in answering an alarm of fire and has his apparatus and equipment in such condition as to give the best service in the shortest possible time. Even a volunteer organization, however, is better than none at all, and the farmers in every community should immediately organize and secure fire fighting apparatus for the purpose of fire protection and to extinguish any fire that may happen in their section. Every such community should select the necessary number of men to act as chiefs and to take charge of the forces fighting a fire. These chiefs could arrange for certain signals and alarms to be given to denote fire in any locality, and also where shovels, wet sacks, chemical extinguishers and other apparatus and utensils are to be obtained at the shortest notice.

Water in many cases is not available, but a chemical fire extinguisher, with which each farmer should be provided, will accomplish more in putting out a fire which has not assumed large proportions, than any other means. Where the district will permit, an automobile or motor truck can be equipped with chemical tanks, and these will prove more effective than river water improperly or unskillfully applied. In several sections of the State this has already been done, and these machines, so equipped, have demonstrated great efficiency.

The Vital Hour.

This is the hour of patriotism, in which the entire strength of the Nation is needed to ward off the danger which threatens our home and country. Never in history has the grave question of the waste and loss arising from preventable fires assumed such serious importance as at the present time. Every pound of fruit, and every ounce of foodstuffs saved from the ravages of fire becomes an added source of strength and support for those who are so gallantly fighting to restore the peace of the world. It is, therefore, the urgent and imperative duty of every citizen to consecrate his utmost effort, both in his individual and communal capacity, towards the elimination of the fire hazard and conservation of the Nation's food supplies.



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