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STEEL TOWERS FOR THE FIRE STATIONS

State's Observation Scheme in the Adirondacks is Ex- plained

Steel observation towers are soon to take the place of the wooden structures used by the state conservation commission at fire observation stations in the Adirondack forest region. The commission has just purchased ten steel towers of a type that has never before been used. They vary in height from forty to seventy feet, depending upon the location. There is an enclosed cabin on the tower which insures a comfortable place for the observer in all kinds of weather.

The system of fire observation stations maintained by the conservation department in the Adirondacks and Catskill regions number in all about fifty. During the season when forest fires are most prevalent a man is stationed at each one who is charged with the sole duty of detecting forest fires and reporting them to the nearest forest ranger. Every station is connected by telephone with the nearest settlement or ranger headquarters and in nearly all cases the stations are also connected with commercial telephone systems which permit long distance service.

Because the summits of many of the mountains in the forest preserves are heavily wooded, it is necessary to erect towers to give the observers an unrestricted view of the surrounding country. Wooden towers have been used in the past, but it has been found necessary to provide some sort of enclosure on the top of the observation station for the comfort of the observer. The high elevation of many of the mountains makes for rigorous weather condi-

tions. High winds are encountered at nearly all periods of the year. Since the conservation commission requires its observers to be on duty at all times, it found it advisable to replace the old wooden towers with the more modern and sheltering contrivance of steel.

Ten steel towers, recently purchased, are at the present time in course of erection. Additional towers of a similar nature are to be purchased until all of the fire observation stations are equipped with them.

Owing to the fact that the spring and early summer have been replete with rain, there have been fewer forest fires this year than in many previous ones. The dry weather, especially when it is accompanied by warm weather, makes conditions for forest fires such as to cause great painstaking on the part of the conservation department to prevent serious loss from a spark, a carelessly tossed match or smouldering camp fire.

Up to the present no forest fires of any importance have been reported to the conservation commission. The rain of the past month has dampened the ground through the decayed stubble of which forest fires generally have their origin.

Thousands of acres of valuable timber, representing an enormous amount of money has been lost in the past as the result of forest fires. Carelessness has been the cause of these fires in more than one instance. Once under headway, it is a weary, dangerous and Herculean task to control the forest flames.

Notwithstanding the fact that there has been plenty of rain, vigilance and precaution against forest fires are just as prevalent now as in former years.