

### Death Rates at Ages over Five.

With one exception, the death rates for both sexes combined for every age-group between 5 and 65 were the lowest ever recorded, the exception, the age group 35-44, being only slightly higher (2.37 per 1,000 population) than the record low rate of 1953 (2.35) for that group. The slight rise was due to an increase in male deaths, the rate for females (2.09) in this age group equalling the previous record low rate of 1952. The rate for the age-group 65-74 (40.6) was the lowest since the record low rate (39.4) of 1948. For ages above 75 the rates were lower than in recent years but higher than those in several earlier years.

### Coronary Heart Disease and Cancer.

The number of deaths from coronary heart disease continued to increase. Among persons aged 40-69 the proportion of deaths due to this cause was exceeded only by that due to all forms of cancer. The proportion increased steadily from just under 10 per cent. at ages 40-44 to just under 20 per cent. at ages 65-69.

The proportion of deaths due to all forms of cancer was approximately 30 per cent. at ages 40-59 and then declined as other causes became relatively more important. The number of deaths from cancer of the lung, bronchus and trachea was 16,331 compared with 15,132 in 1953.

### Deaths from Accidents, Poisonings and Violence.

Suicides numbered 5,043 (3,178 males and 1,865 females), the highest since 1938 (5,316). In 1953 the number was 4,754.

There were 4,589 deaths from motor vehicle accidents, 3,423 males and 1,166 females. Fracture of the skull was the most frequent cause of these deaths. Approximately 25 per cent. of the motor vehicle accident deaths were of persons over 65.

Deaths resulting from accidents in the home and residential institutions continued to increase, and numbered 6,617 (2,452 males and 4,165 females). Of this total 4,790 (or 72 per cent.) were deaths of old people aged 65 and over. 4,188 of all deaths in the home and residential institutions were due to accidental falls; they included five boys and four girls between 5 and 15 years old, but over 90 per cent. were of persons 65 and over.

Deaths in the home and residential institutions due to accidental poisoning by domestic gases continued to increase, from 461 in 1952, 554 in 1953 to 614 in 1954. 395 of these deaths in 1954 were of persons 65 and over.

There were 597 deaths due to accidents caused by fire and explosion of combustible material.

There were 687 deaths of children under five due to accidents in the home and residential institutions. (The number in 1953 was 731). Of these, 250 were certified as due to inhalation and ingestion of food and 182 to accidental suffocation in bed or cradle.

Between the ages of five and 15 there were 107 accidental home deaths, of which nine were of boys and 38 of girls who died from burns. The second highest cause of accidental home death in this age group was gas poisoning, which led to the deaths of five boys and five girls.

\* The Registrar General's Statistical Review, 1954, Part I, Tables, Medical. H.M.S.O., price 12s. 6d. net (or by post from P.O. Box 569, London, S.E.1, price 12s. 11d.).

### Safe for Spastics.

AN IMPORTANT contribution to the safety of children, old people and the physically handicapped of all ages was fittingly marked on Monday, 26th March, when a newly designed open fire with its own built-in safety guard was presented to the Thomas Delarue School for spastic children at Dene Park, Tonbridge, Kent.

The presentation was made at a small ceremony by Mr. R. F. A. Sampson, the London director of the Sheffield firm—Newton, Chambers & Co., Ltd.—whose interest in

safety in the home has led to this useful manufacturing development. The only open fire on the market with its own guard attached, this Redfyre Open Convector Fire is one of the efficient and inexpensive to run modern type fires which burn coke or coal. The guard clips neatly on the front, is easily replaced after refuelling and is made of a remarkable reflecting metal which cannot get hot.

Mr. Sampson, in presenting the fire told the children about the training of young people in his own firm, and quoted the company's slogan for its apprentices—"There is no failure except by ceasing to try." Replying, Mr. H. B. Davies, the Principal of the Thomas Delarue School, said this would be a wonderful motto for his own school and he would like to adopt it.

The School is run by the National Spastic Society and takes 25 children aged 13 and upward. Opened in 1955, it is the only residential secondary school for spastic children in the world.

### Ambulances.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH has issued the following request:

The local Ambulance Services are experiencing increasing difficulty in meeting the heavy demands made upon them and the hospital management committee/board of governors is under an obligation to ensure that vehicles are not used unnecessarily for hospital patients.

Ambulances and sitting cars cannot be provided to convey a patient to or from hospital if the patient is able to undertake the journey on foot or by public conveyance.

The heavy demands made on the ambulance services from time to time exceed their carrying capacity and these services have also to meet many urgent calls which cannot be planned in advance. While every endeavour will be made to collect patients from their homes and return them with as little waiting time as possible, unavoidable delays may sometimes occur.

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