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**EDITORIAL.**

**FIRE PRECAUTIONS AT HOSPITALS.**

As we are all aware apart from the usual civil hospitals which have well equipped fire precautions installed, innumerable semi-military hospitals and convalescent homes have been organized, and in some of these temporary institutions special care is desirable at this stage, when they are approaching their first winter. Quite recently two serious fires have taken place in private houses used as military hospitals—and to minimise such a risk to patients and staff, every precaution is necessary. In this connection we have to thank the British Fire Prevention Committee for the trouble it has taken in issuing a warning and expert advice.

With the coming winter Medical Officers, Matrons and Owners of Hospitals and Convalescent Homes used for civil and military patients are reminded by the Committee that it is essential that all heating and lighting equipment should be looked over, in particular it is necessary that all flues should be cleaned and the joints in stove pipes overhauled whilst electric wiring that has become defective should be repaired and gas globes, etc., broken should be replaced. Where modern forms of steam heating exist special care should be taken to see that the pipes are kept clear of all contact with combustible material.

The preventive measures advocated by the Committee are mainly those that can be obtained with some little systematic arrangement and care. It is accordingly advisable to allocate the responsibility as to fire precautions to a special official, to allocate the duties of lighting up, keeping of matches, candles, oil lamps, etc., so that these matters are a specific duty and not left to haphazard action or neglect.

The all essential is to prevent an outbreak of fire, and next in importance are the arrangements for meeting it promptly in its incipient stage. For this purpose the provision of buckets of water and other simple inexpensive means of applying water should be favoured and sand provided where spirit is used. An effort should be made to drill all members of the staff at fortnightly intervals, so that the wards may be evacuated without confusion, and suitable steps taken to extinguish the fire at the earliest moment. Instances are on record in which the coolness and promptitude of nurses, trained to act together, have materially contributed to the speedy extinction of a fire which might otherwise have assumed alarming proportions.

Last, but not least, comes the reminder that arrangements must be made to call for outside assistance; to call the Fire Brigade in such localities where Fire Brigades exist, or are obtainable within a few miles radius; to call for the police, or for the assistance of the military where these are billeted or are in camp near at hand, the Boy Scouts or any other suitable local organization that can render assistance.

The primary lesson in the matter of fire prevention in hospitals and convalescent homes, however, may be summarised in the following sentence, "Prevention is better than cure."

Hospitals and Convalescent Homes that have not yet posted up suitable notices as to fire precautions, or require fresh copies to replace soiled ones, should obtain them from the British Fire Prevention Committee, 8, Waterloo Place, London, S.W., and act upon the advice given as far as practicable under local conditions. Suitable supplies of notices are obtained free upon the applicant stating the number of beds in the hospital and enclosing an addressed and stamped large size envelope.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)