City of 750,000 Population, And No Water Supply, Uses

Two Tankers With Every Pumper

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The United States Army Corps of Engineers has a fire fighting group in Pusan, Korea, capable of providing fire protection for a large sized municipality in the United States.

Operating as a separate Army unit, the fire department is designated as the 8075th Army Unit Fire Fighting Company. It is a unit of the Korean Communications Zone, which recently moved its headquarters from Taegu to Pusan.

A versatile organization, coping with many problems, the department has been operating in this Oriental city, the fire company has proved its mettle and its fire fighting prowess many times.

One of its paramount problems is Pusan itself. Normally a city of approximately 100,000 people, Pusan today is a sprawling waterfront town housing well over 750,000 people. Refugees constitute 75 per cent of Pusan's Korean population and these people are housed in more than 25,000 shacks thrown up wherever space can be found. The civilian population is augmented by that of the United Nations.

The United States Army has thousands of acres in open storage along Pusan's waterfront and, in addition, has vast stockpiles of military equipment, clothing, food, and other items stored in permanent type warehouses and quonset huts. Pusan harbor is a teeming activity of arriving and departing freighters and troopships and there are an untold number of Korean houseboats of every description hugging the fringe of the harbor. The entire city is a gigantic tinderbox. As a tremendous firetrap, it probably has no equal anywhere in the world.

A history of shoddy construction in Korea is prevalent in Pusan and has added greatly to the ever present fire danger.

In order for the company to reach the scene of a fire within five minutes after receiving an alarm, Pusan is divided into sections; each of the areas is under the supervision of a Noncommissioned Officer fire chief. The company has ten fire stations located in the city proper and, in addition, there are five others located in outlying sections, including Hamhung, Masan and Osan. There are many Army installations in each of these latter localities.

Through a close knit operation based upon experience, the department can muster, if necessary, 104 pieces of rolling fire fighting equipment at the scene of a fire anywhere in Pusan within a very few minutes.

Because of the absence of water mains in Pusan, the procurement of water is a problem not only for fire fighting and other uses, but also for human consumption. The fire department utilizes water tankers on a ratio of two tankers per one fire engine. There are sixty six such tankers available and each water conveyor has 1,000 gallons capacity. If the scene of a fire is not near an engineer water point in Pusan, the department has to rely solely on these tankers and there is an emergency set-up so that when the sixty tankers can be called into play if necessary. If a fire is near the harbor, and this has happened many times, the department has three fire boats it can use to relay water from the ocean through the fire engines where it is put into hose under pressure. This measure failed at one time because of shallow water in the harbor which has prevented operation of the fire boats. To circumvent this problem, the department has devised a means of stretching hose from the shoreline to the boats without any appreciable loss in the water supply.

In manpower, the fire department has over 350 men, the greatest majority of which are trained and experienced firemen. Over 100 of the firemen are Republic of Korea soldiers (KATUSA) attached to the United States Army. There are approximately 125 U.S. enlisted men, and 150 Korean National. Five American Corps of Engineer officers complete the department's complement of trained personnel.

Along with answering numerous fire calls, some on large scale conflagrations, the department conducts daily classes in fire fighting and prevention. Since the men live in the stations, this is easily accomplished with on-the-spot instruction. Fire fighting practices and equipment measures are taught in the classes.

All of the rolling equipment, with the exception of the fire engine, is owned by the company. It is, however, equipped with hose, fire appliances, ladder trucks, and also carry the usual number of small fire engines in such units as firemen companies. A company has a stock of equipment, hose, fire apparatus, and also carry small fire engines in such units as firemen companies.

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The Staff of the Fire Engine

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is each of the water mains of water is fighting and is consumed. The city utilizes water tanks per sixty six fire hydrant. If the water tankers per sixty six fire hydrant. If the water tankers per sixty six fire hydrant. If the water tankers per sixty six fire hydrant. If the water tankers per sixty six fire hydrant. If the water the fire department has among its vast array of fire fighting equipment, approximately six miles of hose. It also has extensive ladder equipment, including a 30-foot mounted ladder which is stationed near the Station Hospital. Because there are not more than two-story buildings in Pusan, most of the ladder equipment is in 24 and 36-foot lengths. The department has access to heavy duty fire fighting equipment for the preparing of fire breaks should the need arise. The fire engines, often referred to as tigers, or as they are sometimes called, are specially designed Corps of Engineers overseas fire equipment. They were designed in the United States.

The department operates its own motor pool, where skilled soldiers maintain the equipment in constant readiness for instant use. A continuing check is maintained on all equipment and the shops are fitted to perform 3rd echelon maintenance in most every case where it is necessary.

Maine Keeps Explosives Trucks Under Surveillance

The State of Maine's dozen fire inspectors ride herd on explosives trucks, last year rolling up 20,606 miles checking their charges over Maine's roads.

According to Joseph A. P. Flynn, director of the fire prevention bureau in the Maine State Insurance Department, Maine is the only state requiring, as a safety measure, that explosives always be escorted over its highways.

Mr. Flynn gets 12 hours notice of the scheduled arrival at the Maine border of all trucks entering the State with dynamite or ammunition for the big air bases in Aroostook County, and for the construction jobs like the Maine Turnpike Extension. With the step-up in defense, Flynn and his men are getting more and more "ammo" jobs—60 tons so far this year compared with 55 tons in all for 1954.

The last year's total tonnage, escorted by the fire inspectors, was over 1,000 tons or 2,142,130 pounds, to be exact. And in the five years that the Maine inspectors have been riding with the big red explosives trucks, bearing red flags and flashing red lights, there has never been an explosion. The nearest they ever came to it was when a dynamite truck caught fire near Lewiston. Fortunately, the inspectors had quick help from the Lewiston Fire Department and put the fire out before it reached the truck body.

But this good record hasn't made the inspectors careless. The first thing they do on picking up an explosives truck or trailer, is to check the tires, brakes, lights, mechanical equipment and storage of the cargo. Nor is the driver of the vehicle overlooked.

Although there's no danger from dynamite if its properly stowed, according to Flynn, there is big hazard in fire. So, before starting out, each inspector takes from the truck drivers all cigarettes or matches—just in case.

Another precaution is to check the tires every two hours, or oftener. With dual wheels one tire may go flat without the driver realizing it, as the other one will hold up the load alone. But friction can set fire to the flat tire.

Four of the blow-ups on ammunition trucks in other states in 1953 were caused by flat tires that set the truck or trailer ablaze.

According to Flynn most of the drivers are very cooperative, "but occasionally," he said, "we run across a 'cowboy.' Once Flynn encountered a driver who was a lot more dangerous than a 'cowboy.'"

"I was escorting this truck myself," said Flynn, "and noticed that the driver was stopping pretty often. So I got out of my car and asked him why. "Oh, he told me," "I'm a diabetic and have to stop and take my insulin."

When the I. C. C. had Flynn's report of this incident, the driver was ruled off the road.

Conveying explosives trucks is a slow job. The vehicles are kept down to 35 miles an hour, paced by an inspector riding 150 feet ahead. If there are more than one truck in the convoy, the units are kept 500 feet apart, and another inspector rides behind. Insofar as possible, the explosives conveyos avoid cities and towns altogether. They generally use back roads, traveling at night as much as possible to avoid traffic.