Sunshine Advocate

Employees flee as fire sweeps storeroom

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EMPLOYEES FLEE AS FIRE SWEEPS STOREROOM

Employees at a Sunshine factory had narrow escapes from injury when a fire swept through a storeroom last Monday afternoon, causing £25,000 worth of damage.

Four fire units attended the blaze in Currie Furniture Manufacturing Co. Pty. Ltd's store in 7 Cetnral Ave., Sunshine.

The fire ravaged the storeroom of the factory where sewing machines, wrapped in cartons, were stacked ready for despatch.

Damaged or completely lost were 1500 sewing machines and 200 buffets.

The fire started on the roof of the storeroom, where a welding plant was being used on extensions to the building. It is believed that a spark started the blaze.

The fire swept across the roof of the storeroom in seconds and four employees had narrow escapes.

Mr. Dennis Howarth, of Strathmore, sewing machine mechanic, was trapped in the building and had to dive through a window to escape the flames.

Mr. Howarth cut his leg when he crashed through the window and dropped 8ft. into Central Ave.

Mr. Howarth said, "I was trapped in the building. I could not reach the door because of the heat and smoke. I took a dive through the window as it was the only way out.

"The fire started in a corner of the roof and shot across the room like a flash."

The other employees, including foreman of the section, Mr. Barry Hitchcock, of 15 Robinson St., Sunshine, managed to escape through emergency exits.

TRAPPED

Quick action by the employees stopped the flames from reaching the main factory where dining room furniture was stored.

Mr. Hitchcock said, "We had no hope of stopping the fire. I grabbed an extinguisher and the sprinkler started but it was useless. The heat and smoke forced us out the door."

As the firemen tackled the blaze, employees rushed in and out of the smoke-filled building saving sewing machines.

The company's managing director, Mr. John Currie, praised the actions of the employees and thanked two neighboring firms, Kagan Bros. and Conner Shea for the help they gave with equipment.

DELAY

Many of the employees had soaked clothes and smoke affected eyes, but still they continued to get as many machines out as possible. These were stored in a factory opposite.

Mr. Currie said the fire would hold up deliveries for at least a month, but all staff would be kept on while the storeroom was repaired.

The firm is the major Victorian distributor for sewing machines and deliveries to major stores throughout the State will be delayed as a result of the fire.

Damage was at first thought to be in the region of £45,000, but a true valuation will not be estimated until a few days.

Salvage operations were still continuing last Tuesday and insurance inspectors were busy assessing the damage.

● An employee of Currie Furniture Manufacturing Co. Pty. Ltd., carries out a sewing machine from the smoke-filled storeroom last Monday afternoon.
—Photographed by R. Mudford Studio.

Wandering stock 'go to school'

Wandering cattle and horses have been proving a menace at Braybrook High School during recent weeks, and on at least two separate occasions, the headmaster has had to drive the stock from the school grounds.

President of the school's Advisory Council, Mr. J. O. Peatreath, said the trouble was caused mainly by a fence, which was not

animals out the gate and off the school grounds.

"Working bees by parents and members of the advisory council established