

Heat Victims Must Wait Their Turn as Life Squad Rushes From Home to Home; Firemen Stay on Duty Without Rest

The streets seemed full of Life Saving Squad trucks Thursday, although there were only two in service. They were everywhere, clanging and screaming as they sped to the aid of persons who had felt the icy touch of heat prostration.

The victims had sweltered and suddenly they grew horribly cold. The sweat dried on their bodies. The back of their necks became rigid and then they were bathed in a clammy perspiration. Consciousness left them and they fell, on the streets, in their homes, in autos, everywhere.

Scores were felled Wednesday as the billowing heat reached its maximum of nearly 107 degrees. Forty-five died. With only two Life Saving trucks available, many of the victims were given only the amateur aid of relatives or pedestrians who had seen them collapse.

How to Get Squad

One may call the Life Saving Squad by asking the telephone operator for the Fire Department. Sometimes it will respond, but in many cases it is not available. The sick and the dying must wait as if in a line for their turn. From one to another the squad truck speeds, directed often by radio broadcasts from Station X. Since Wednesday

morning, Capt. Daniel Kummer and his four life savers have not been out of their clothes.

For the present emergency, they are divided into two squads, one manning the truck that is used regularly and is equipped to give aid in all kinds of disaster. The second squad operates on an ambulance which has been called into service temporarily.

The men are grim, speechless as they speed on their errands. Their faces are red and their blue shirts are darkened by perspiration. No word is spoken as the truck screams to a halt before a house from which a call for aid has come. Each man knows what to do.

Each to His Post

One seizes a first aid kit and another the inhalator, blankets and towels. Capt. Kummer, who rides with the regular truck, leads the way into the house. A young woman, rigid and with face livid, is lying on a bed while distraught relatives flutter about, not knowing what to do.

Capt. Kummer touches her brow and presses his thumb against her wrist. By reason of his long experience, he needs no thermometer or watch to determine her temperature or the condition of her pulse.

"Bring ice!" he commands with quiet efficiency.

There is no ice. A member of the squad rushes into the street and confiscates a piece from an ice wagon which, fortunately is parked nearby.

While one man places the cup of the inhalator over the victim's face, Capt. Kummer covers her forehead, arms and chest with towels saturated with water from the melting ice.

Then he continues to test her temperature and pulse. When her brow begins to feel cooler to the touch and the heart beat quickens, the inhalator is removed and a bottle of aromatic spirits of ammonia is passed beneath her nostrils.

Victim's Eyes Open

The victim's eyes flutter open, but she does not move. Chemical heating pads are placed at her feet and she is wrapped in blankets to prevent complications which might result from the chill that accompanies convalescence.

At this point, an angry iceman comes in from the street.

"Somebody took some ice off my wagon!" he complains.

"We did," Capt. Kummer replies. "This woman's sick. How much do we owe you?"

"Oh, that's O. K." The iceman is

mollified. "You don't owe me nothing. Do you need any more?"

The life savers were in the house 20 minutes. Back at their station on W. Court-st, they immediately set out on another run.

The Life Saving Squad has made 115 runs since Friday, 235 this month. It used 10 tanks of oxygen Wednesday.

Touched by Thanks

Capt. Kummer, called "skipper" by his men and "doctor" by patients, is always touched by the profuse thanks of the people he aids. Gratifying also is the message from Safety Director Hoehler transmitted to him through Fire Chief Barney Huston.

"So much service has been provided by members of the Life Saving Squad that I would like to express my personal appreciation and my appreciation as an official to each member for his splendid sacrificial service," Mr. Hoehler said.

The great number of heat prostrations and the constant attention such cases need has taxed the staff of St. Mary Hospital, according to Sister Wencesla, superintendent. She has asked the aid of volunteer nurses and internes, during the record-breaking heat wave.