

Temporary Blindness Menace Four Firemen

Intense Light from Electric Arc At Street Car Fire Blamed; Score Of Passengers Uninjured.

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, June 14, 1933) Temporary blindness threatens four firemen as the result of a street car fire, Tuesday.

Stricken several hours after the blaze two men were being treated in Grant hospital, Wednesday, and the others at home for severe eye burns.

Whether the eyes of the firemen will be permanently affected or if treatment will restore complete sight will not be known for at least 36 hours.

Victims, all members of No. 7 engine house, Euclid avenue and Pearl street are:

Capt. Lee M. Green, 2432 Adams avenue in Grand hospital.

Clyde Overly, 220 Tompkins street, in Grant hospital.

C.L. Barney, 878 Chittenden avenue, at home.

W.B. Fletcher, 49 West Duncan street, at home.

Captain Green is one of three men – Acting Chief Clarence Ogborn and Capt. Edward P. Welch are the others – from whom a choice for fire chief will be made by Mayor Worley.

These four were members of the company which was dispatched to Fifteenth avenue and Summit street when a broken trolley ignited a street car.

A score of passengers escaped from the street car unhurt.

Illumination from the electric arc caused when the “charged” wire was short-circuited on the street car resulted in injury to the firemen’s eyes, Dr. Herbert Obetz declared.

Obetz, physician for the police and fire department, stated he believed the men were in no immediate danger, but said he could not guarantee recovery pending observations of the manner in which the quartet respond to treatment.

Fire officials fear a number of spectators at the blaze also may have been affected by the “arc” and advised them to see a physician immediately if they have trouble with their eyes.

The intense light caused by the high voltage in the trolley wire burns the delicate eye tissues, Obetz related.

Of the four firemen, Fletcher was affected least.

Barney was the first to feel the effects of the burns, and after treatment by Dr. Obetz was removed to his home, four hours after the fire.

Damaged Is \$5000

Captain Green and Overly did not notice the ailment until about 7 p.m. and they were taken to the hospital late Tuesday.

The former was unable to see at all when taken from the engine house, but regained partial visibility following treatment at the hospital.

No. 7 company was the only one sent to the scene. Damage to the street car was estimated by Rail-Light officials at \$5000.



Photos of the damaged streetcar No. 649, described in the article above. The car was in the Merritt Street carhouse before being scrapped. Note the destination sign is for Worthington. Photo from the Dave Bunge Collection, 1933.



