

Notes and news

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Swiss nylon

It is a year now since nylon began to be manufactured in Switzerland. And by «nylon» we mean not just a «polymeric amide» of some sort but the original product of this name, manufactured under licence from Du Pont by the Swiss Viscose Co. at Emmenbrücke. As its name indicates, this firm was principally devoted to the production of viscose rayon: wishing to safeguard its interests against future competition which might become dangerous — and which did in fact become so — it secured rights of representation for itself as early as 1939. It could have started manufacture in 1945, but the demand was not yet sufficient at that time to guarantee success. The situation has changed completely since then and the Swiss Viscose Company has put itself in a position to manufacture nylon, so as to be able to maintain its activity and continue to provide

work for its employees, nylon being above all a rival of rayon.

In order to be able to guarantee high quality production right from the start and to be in a position to increase it so as to be able to meet demands fully, the firm at Emmenbrücke built a large new factory adjoining the buildings where viscose rayon and staple fibre are still manufactured.

Manufacture of «Emmenbrücke Nylon» on an industrial scale began in February 1951. At the moment Swiss production, concentrated in a single establishment, is sufficient to meet the whole of the needs of the home market for 15 to 70 denier continuous yarns for weaving and hosiery.

Emmenbrücke also spins knitting yarns reinforced with nylon fibre specially used for hand work. These products are already well introduced on the market.

A fire-proof fabric

A Swiss firm has just put on the market a fire-proof fabric which constitutes a veritable revolution in this field and which has made possible the manufacture of equipment for fire-fighting and for protection against fire of an efficiency never before equalled.

The asbestos clothing generally used for fire-fighting has two disadvantages which limit its effective use: it is not sufficient protection against heat and is too heavy to wear. «Tempex» fabric on the other hand, and the pieces of equipment made of this material have the advantage of affording very efficient protection against heat and of being light in weight; (whereas an asbestos suit weighs between 26 and 33 lbs. the weight of a Tempex outfit is between 4½ and 6 lbs. only).

Tempex fabric is formed of a strong, non-inflammable base material covered with a layer of aluminium, the function of which is to insulate against heat by reflection. The practical tests which have been carried out both by the Federal Laboratory for the Testing of Materials in Saint-Gall and by the Fire Brigade of the same town have been conclusive. Four men wearing protective suits were able during a period of twenty minutes to remain in the immediate vicinity of two fires consisting of piles of wood about 35 cubic feet each in volume and situated about 5 feet apart, with their flames meeting. Although the heat generated amounted to between 1000 and 1200°C and compelled the spectators to stand at least 35 feet from the fire, the firemen were able to pass through the curtain of flames

without suffering any ill effects whatsoever. At the beginning of the experiment two wooden cases filled with paper and wood shavings were placed at a distance of 3 feet from the fire, with the openings turned towards the flames, one being protected by a Tempex screen. Whereas the unprotected case soon caught fire, the other was not affected at all by the heat and its contents were found intact at the end of the experiment.

The results obtained in the Saint-Gall Federal Laboratory, which unfortunately space does not allow us to go into here, were equally conclusive.

The fire-fighting suits made of Tempex fabric consist of boots, a coat, an inside mask for the face, a hood with a protective opening for the eyes, and mittens. The whole outfit weighs very little, is easy to put on and take off and fits loosely enough to allow complete freedom of movement and to enable a mask or an oxygen apparatus to be worn. There also exist protective pieces for men working near furnaces in various industries (ceramics, metallurgy, etc.); in addition it is possible to obtain protective sheets intended for covering, either permanently or in an emergency, objects or goods exposed to heat or flames. The name «Tempex» is an internationally registered trade mark and all articles bearing this name are patented both in Switzerland and abroad.

The technical details concerning the experiments mentioned here are taken from the «Swiss Firemen's Journal» (Berne).

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