

Ballantynes fire

Ballantynes, a large department store in Christchurch, was one of the most popular places to shop. It sold everything from clothes and shoes to homeware and furniture. But what seemed like an **ordinary** store became the site of a **tragedy** that no one expected.

When and how the fire started

On Tuesday 18th November a fire started in the cellar at Ballantynes. An employee was informed about the fire, so they called the fire brigade and brushed it off like it was nothing. Minutes later and still no fire brigade had arrived. On this day the fire station was short on staff so it was going to take longer for them to get to the scene. **Eventually** the fire brigade did make an **appearance** but by then it was too late the fire had already spread throughout the building.

What went wrong

There were many **problems** that made the fire worse. The store didn't have enough emergency exits, **nor** were there clear escape plans. People were trapped on the upper floors, and the black smoke made it hard to breathe or see. Firefighters quickly came to help, but the fire had already spread too far.

The tragic outcome

In total, 41 people died in the Ballantynes fire. Most of the **victims** were employees, and many of them were women. The fire shocked the whole country, for nothing like it had happened in New Zealand before. Newspapers **published** stories for weeks, and funerals were held all over Christchurch.

Conclusion – Why is this event still remembered?

The Ballantynes fire was a **disaster**, it led to major important changes that made New Zealand **safer**. People came together to make sure this kind of tragedy would never happen again.



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Fire might seem like something that won't happen to you, but it can happen anywhere and that's why we need to be prepared. We remember the Ballantynes fire not just because it was sad, but because it taught us a lesson we can't afford to forget.

Glossary

ordinary -Something that is normal, usual, or not special or different.

Tragedy- A very sad or terrible event, often involving death or great loss.

Eventually- After a period of time or in the end, especially after some delay or difficulty.

Appearance- The way someone or something looks or seems to other people.

Problems- Things that are difficult to deal with or need to be solved.

Nor- "Not either" it connects two negative ideas.

Victims- People who are hurt, harmed, or treated badly, especially by an accident, crime, or disaster.

Published- Made something (like a book, article, or story) available for everyone to read, usually by printing it or putting it online.

Disaster- A sudden, terrible event that causes a lot of damage, suffering, or loss.

Christchurch Libraries: [*Ballantynes' fire – 18 November 1947*](#)

Canterbury Stories: [*Aftermath of Ballantyne's fire, view from Cashel Street, Christchurch*](#)

Nz Geo: [*The girls can't get out!*](#)

Christchurch City Libraries: [*Ballantynes fire photographs*](#)

New Zealand Herald: [*Ballantynes department store inferno survivor reveals failures and omissions in NZ's worst fire tragedy*](#)

Reflection

Use this checklist to reflect on your writing:

- ☐ My introduction clearly tells the reader what my report is about.
- ☐ Each paragraph sticks to one main idea.
- ☐ My information is in a logical order.
- ☐ I used linking words like 'as a result', 'then', 'because', or 'finally'.
- ☐ I used facts and bolded technical words from my planning.