Tel. Address: "Em[illegible] Sowest[illegible]ndon."
Tel. No.: VICtoria [illegible]6.

*Any communication on the subject of this letter should be addressed to—*

THE SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY,
HORSEFERRY HOUSE,
THORNEY STREET,
LONDON, S.W.1.

*and the following reference quoted :—*

# MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY, HORSEFERRY HOUSE, THORNEY STREET, LONDON, S.W.1.

H.S.C.114/40.
J.1.

2nd June, 1940.

F.B.70/40.

Sir,

Home Security Circular No. 114/1940.
F.B. Circular No.70/1940.
Delegation of powers to Regional Commissioners.

1. I am directed by the Minister of Home Security to inform you that an Order in Council has been made under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts 1939 and 1940 whereby a new Regulation (Defence Regulation 29A) is added to the Defence (General) Regulations, 1939; (Statutory Rules and Orders, 1940, No.845). The general effect of the Regulation is to confer on the appropriate Minister express power to give directions to Local Authorities in relation to all civil defence functions under the Air Raid Precautions Act, 1937, and the Civil Defence Act, 1939, including the extinction of fires. The Minister may also require any person who is performing civil defence services for an authority "to do such acts and carry out such operations (whether inside or outside the area of the authority) for the purpose of protecting persons and property against hostile attack or mitigating the consequences thereof as the Minister may specify". A separate Regulation has been made in respect of the Police Services.

2. The extent to which these powers may have to be exercised will depend upon circumstances, but in the meantime the Minister of Home Security has decided, in consultation with the Minister of Health, to delegate immediately to Regional Commissioners for Civil Defence in England and Wales, such of his powers under Regulation 29A as will enable them to take control and direction of the operations of civil defence services in the regions. The services referred to include Air Raid Wardens, Report and Control Centres, First Aid Parties, Ambulances, First Aid Posts and Mobile Units, Rescue Parties and Decontamination Squads. The Regulation in question and this circular do not affect the present orders governing the arrangements for the reinforcement of fire brigades which are already under the control of Regional Commissioners or, in London, The Regional Fire Officer, but the Regional Commissioners will have power to take further action as circumstances may require in any exceptional emergency which cannot be met by means of the measures which have been pre-arranged.

The Clerk of the County Council,
The Town Clerk,
The Clerk of the District Council.

By virtue of this delegation of powers, Regional Commissioners have authority to take such steps as they may consider necessary (a) to direct and control the operation of these services, either within the area of a scheme-making authority or within the area of a group of authorities which may be acting as one unit for the purposes of civil defence, and (b) to require authorities to co-operate in the preparation of mutual assistance pacts and reinforcement schemes as contemplated in Home Security Circular 69/1940, and to direct and control the operation of these arrangements as may be necessary.

3. The Regulation also provides that the Minister may direct an extension, or reduction, of the area in which all or any of the civil defence functions of a local authority are to be exercised, and may transfer all or any of those functions from one local authority to another, or to himself, or to a person appointed by him. It is not contemplated that these powers will be exercised unless there are quite exceptional circumstances. The Minister will, however, not hesitate to avail himself of these powers, in so far as that course may be necessary to facilitate the prompt treatment of any difficulties which may arise, particularly where efficiency under air raid conditions may not be fully achieved if the boundaries of scheme-making authorities are adhered to.

4. Provision is made in the Regulation for the making of payments by local authorities in respect of things done in pursuance of directions given, and, subsequently, for the making of financial adjustments between the authorities affected.

5. In conclusion I am to say that in taking these powers, and in delegating certain of them to Regional Commissioners, the Minister has had in mind the need for ensuring in advance that nothing should stand in the way of the efficiency of the operation of the Civil Defence Services. Local authorities and officers will continue to be responsible for the efficiency and control of their local services, and it is the desire and intention of the Minister that they should exercise their initiative in dealing with situations as they arise. Regional Commissioners will exercise the powers now delegated to them to overcome any difficulties which may emerge in the course of operations, and to ensure as far as possible effective co-operation between authorities and the control of reinforcement schemes.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

H. C. Emmerson.

Issued to all Local Authorities in England and Wales.

Copies sent for information to Chief Officers of Police and Chief Officers of Fire Brigades in England and Wales.