

ASRAA offers tips for villagers who travel

by the Association for Stranded
Rural Alaskans in Anchorage

for the Tundra Times

Caroline (not her real name) expected her trip to Anchorage to be an adventure. She had saved for more than a year for this trip to visit her sister.

Coming from a village of fewer than 400 people, she was sure it would be much different in the city.

Caroline often met the planes that flew to her village. In fact, when visitors to the village needed a ride to the city offices or the school, she often drove them there in her family's car. Even though she didn't know them, she considered them her friends because the visitors were usually people who were there to help the village in some way.

Since her sister did not have a car, Caroline realized she would have to catch a ride to her sister's place. So when Caroline landed in Anchorage, she had expected to get off the plane and ask someone for directions to her sister's place and possibly a ride.

She was shocked at the immense size of the airport. She asked several people for directions. Three men told her they knew her sister, May, and would take her to the house.

Instead, the men took her to the outskirts of the city, stripped her of her clothing, and left her.

This soft-spoken young woman was devastated when she arrived at the office of the Association for Stranded



If someone doesn't show up at the airport, have phone numbers of family and friends to contact.

Rural Alaskans in Anchorage, thanks to the Anchorage Police Department and some wonderful, caring people who rescued her.

Upon questioning, Caroline kept saying, "I didn't expect so many streets. I thought it would be easy to get to my sister's place."

If you travel to Anchorage, be prepared before you travel. Call or write friends to make sure they are aware of your arrival time. Before you travel, confirm with them the following information:

- Who will be picking you up at the

airport? What will you do if the person is not at the airport when you arrive? What if they do not come for several hours?

- If you will be taking a cab, what is the exact address of the place you will be staying? Keep this address and the phone numbers in several places — in your jacket, your luggage and your wallet. This will save you a long-distance call home to get that information if you lose one of the addresses.

- Do you have an alternative plan? What if your relatives are not at home when you get there? Where will you

go?

- Where will you be staying? For how long? How much will the stay in the city cost you — realistically?

Anchorage is a very large city compared to other communities in Alaska. The airport is an international airport, with hundreds of people going through it each day.

Chances of anyone in the airport knowing a relative of someone would be slim. There are hundreds of streets in Anchorage, with 250,000 people in the city. Chances of someone on the street knowing someone's relative also would be slim.

When you travel, have an alternate plan. If someone doesn't show up at the airport, have phone numbers of family and friends to contact.

If you have problems, airport security people are very helpful. If needed, they will supply you with the phone number for ASRAA, which has staff available for emergencies 24 hours a day.

If you travel on weekdays, you can get traveler's checks at the airport banks. This will ensure your money will be replaced if lost or stolen.

ASRAA staff will send a free travel packet to those who request it. It will provide you with information to plan a safe trip, estimated costs during your stay and basic personal safety information. If you plan ahead, you will travel safely and enjoy your stay!

The ASRAA phone number and address are: 277-7043; ASRAA, 2701 Denali, Suite 1, Anchorage 99503.