

UA Geophysical Institute To Fire Rockets in March

Beginning the first week in March, the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska will begin a series of rocket firings from a launch site 30 miles north of Fairbanks on the Steese High-

way.

The project, headed by Dr. Davis of the Institute, will study the earth's electronic field in the upper atmosphere.

The electronic field in our northern auroral zone is both large and strong, presenting great interest to scientists. Information about the field will be valuable knowledge for high altitude flight, as that of the SST jet.

The first flight will take place on March 3, weather permitting, during evening twilight, or about 7 p.m. Fairbanks time.

There will be eight such launchings during the month of March. The element barium is to be released from the two or three stage rockets.

Although there is darkness on the ground, sunlight at the upper atmosphere would illuminate the barium, creating a cloud which could be seen throughout most of Alaska.

The cloud will first appear red, then green as it spreads. Part of the barium cloud, electronically charged by the sun, can be seen as a purple glow and will move at speed of over 1,000 miles per hour.

The cloud can be expected to move with greater speed and seen more intensely than the aurora.

Staff members of the Geophysical Institute and scientists coming here from across the country will study the clouds with a variety of instruments.

The Institute has requested that amateur photographers throughout the state submit photographs of the cloud, which would aid in the study.

The rocket firing site is to be manned by a crew from the White Sands Missile Range. The firing range extends north from Chatanika site in the direction of Fort Yukon, over unoccupied federal land.

The Institute will be patrolling the impact area prior to launch and urges anyone who might be operating a snow machine or dog team to stay clear of the range.