

PHS FURNISHES SAFE WATER FOR KOTZEBUE

Word is getting around in Kotzebue that there is an easier—and safer for health—way to get water than the traditional trips to the lake or river to cut ice or dip water.

Now, at 15 cents for five gallons, the Kotzebue householder may draw running water guaranteed safe at the new 1.5 million gallon water tank built by the U.S. Public

Health Service in its environmental health program.

This first phase of a community water system was completed recently under Public Law 86-121 which provided federal funds for such an endeavor when the community also contributes in some way, such as labor, material or cash.

Customers, individuals or commercial haulers, get

their water at a window opening in the pump house. For each token, sold by the water plant operator, inserted in the coin-operated meter, the individual may draw five gallons through a one-inch diameter hose.

Haulers get their water through a 1½-inch hose in increments of 250 gallons for each coin inserted. Their delivered-to-home price at present is about seven cents a gallon.

All Unit prices now in effect will be reviewed by the city of Kotzebue after six months. The city is presently operating the tank facility jointly with PHS for a trial period prior to assuming total operation and maintenance.

Freezing conditions in the tank, which measures 40 feet in height and 80.5 feet in diameter, are minimized by a heating system making this the largest tank heated with a boiler in Alaska.

In a boiler house attached to the tank a circulating pump pulls water and then pushes it through an oil-fired boiler and back again to the tank.

This raises the water temperature to a little over 40 degrees Fahrenheit and insures that the water will run to the dispensing hoses. Boiler operation, complete with timing device, is almost automatic.

Devils Lake, about three miles distant, is water source for the tank now. The plant is set up so that eventually water could be piped to the homes.

A second phase in this project's planning anticipates a use of some 30 million gallons of water annually at the end of the next 20 years or so by residents of the Kotzebue community.

To prepare for this, a dam will be built near Vortac Lake, a small lake in the hills, to make a reservoir.

Summer storage in this proposed reservoir, which will inundate two lakes plus the presently-used Devils Lake, will be 204 million gallons, but in winter it would be only a quarter of that amount.

Water will run to the tank by gravity with heat being used where needed to insure flow. Watering points throughout the town may be an intermediary step to eventual home piping.

The PHS hospital in Kotzebue and the school there will be using the tank water soon, also, eliminating need for the desalination plant which now serves both institutions.

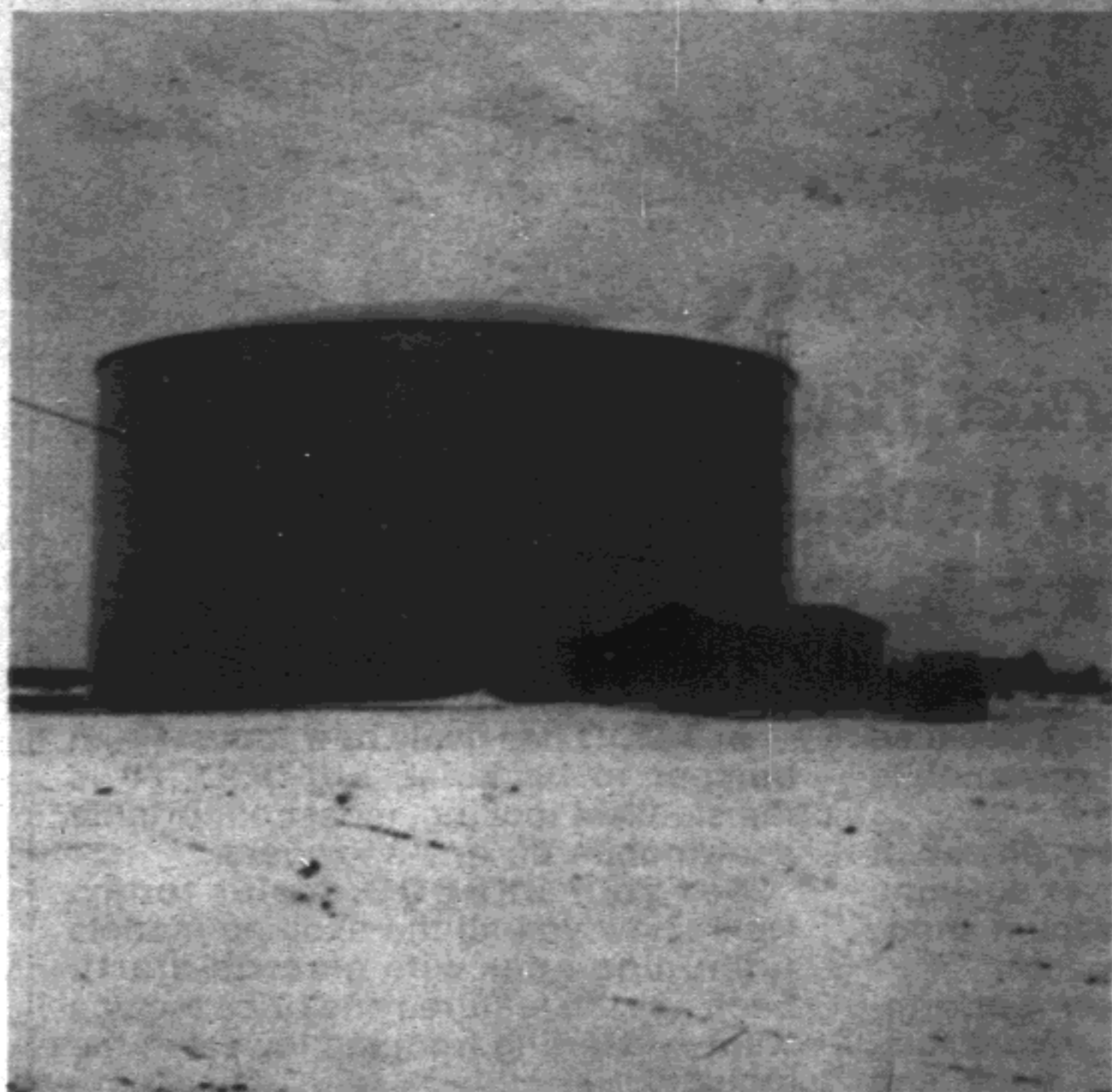
Project funds at this stage did not permit getting insulated pipe needed for such connections.

Residents say the new water supply "tastes better than the hospital water." The observation is apt in that the distilled water lacks the natural minerals which would give the water "taste."

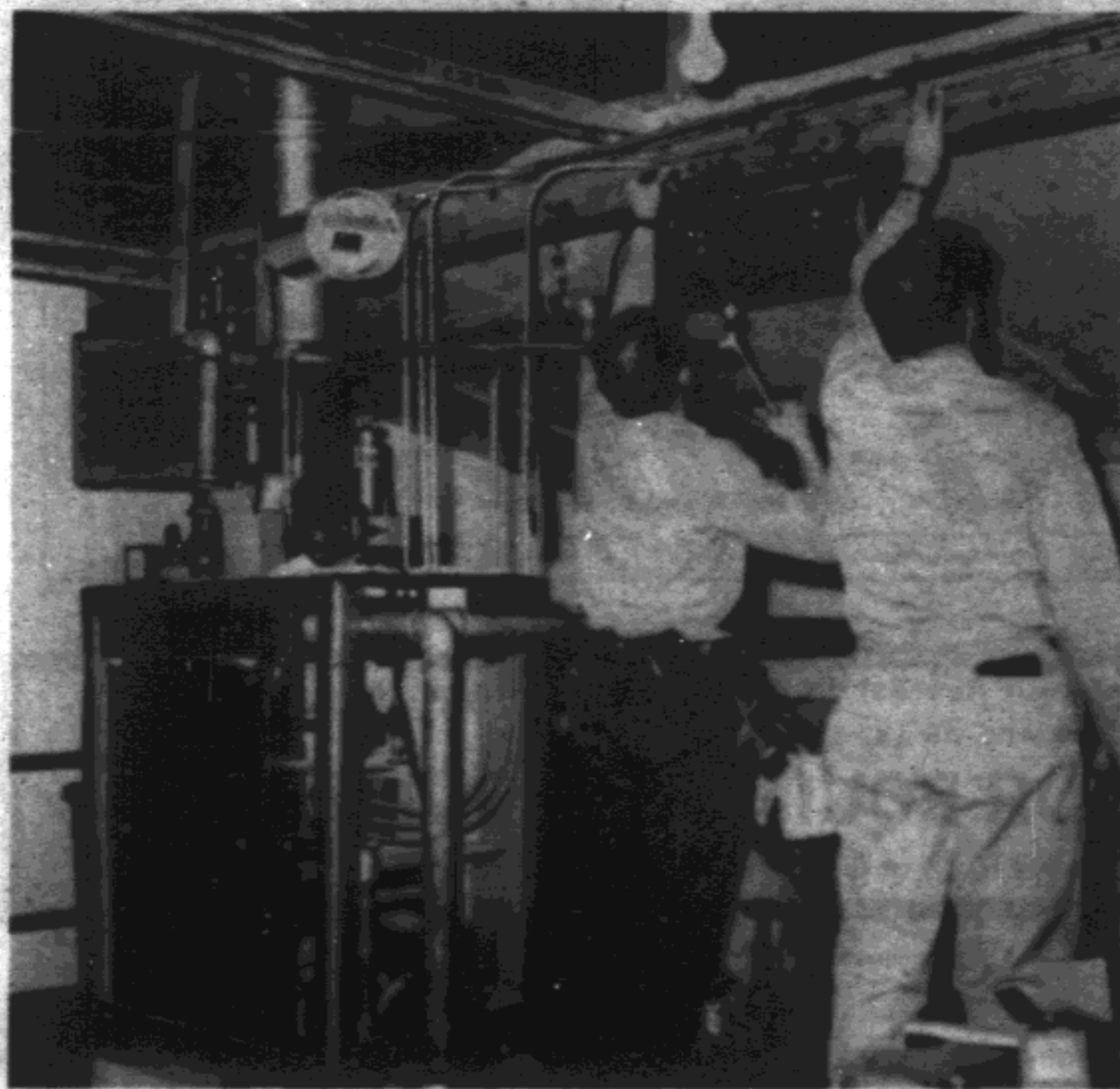
PHS is helping to investigate ways in which everyone would be able to purchase the new water supply. Officials hope that soon everyone in the community

can abandon the hard—and frequently unhealthy—ways of getting the water from the pollution-prone streams or their ice.

Safe water supply and proper waste disposal are two elements of the basic environmental health program to improve Native health.



NEW ADDITION to the Kotzebue skyline is this 40-foot-high water tank whose diameter is 80.5 feet. Small building attached is the boiler house where the heater works to keep the water in the 1.5 million gallon capacity tank from freezing. The project was completed recently as an environmental health program action of the U.S. Public Health Service to give safe water to residents of this Arctic community.



FINISHING TOUCHES are applied to boiler wiring by Jack Young, project foreman, and Hugh Bartol, project engineer for the U.S. Public Health Service environmental health project of a safe water supply in Kotzebue. Heat from this boiler keeps water in the 1.5 million gallon capacity tank from freezing and able to run from dispensing hoses where townspeople may come for the water.

(USPHS PHOTO)