

Villages get live television

With the flick of a switch, operators of mini-TV translators located in rural Alaska communities helped begin programming on Saturday, January 15, to 11 of the 23 designated villages in a special one-year television demonstration project.

In a joint statement, RCA Alaska Communications, Inc. and the State of Alaska announced recently the start of satellite television transmission to the bush under a \$1.5 million pilot project. The project, introduced by State Senator Frank Ferguson of Kotzebue and authorized by the 1976 Alaska Legislature, has also increased the amount of live television transmission to Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and Sitka.

Beginning at 5 p.m. AST, five hours of network programming, including "Sonny and Cher" and "Saturday Night at the Movies," were beamed to the villages via the RCA Satcom II satellite. An additional hour of educational programming will be shown weekdays during the morning hours. The satellite was also used on Saturday to bring television programming to the urban area.

The 23 bush villages receiving satellite television broadcasts are among these communities where small earth stations with 15-foot antennas have been installed by RCA Alascom in agreement with the State. RCA Alascom plans to install at least 100 earth stations in rural Alaska by the end of

1977 to provide long distance telephone service and (in most villages) emergency medical communications. The 23 villages were selected by the Alaska Federation of Natives Telecommunications Committee to participate in the one-year project.

The villages of Chitin, Tatitlek, Holy Cross, Shageluk, Noatak, Tenakee Springs, Mekoryuk, Kipnuk, Shungnak, Emmonak, and Ambler are among the villages equipped with an earth station which received television on January 15. RCA Alascom plans to complete the installation of the television equipment in the remaining villages by February 15.

Each of the 23 villages will have an operator who will be trained by personnel from the Governor's Office of Telecommunications to man the mini-TV translators. The operators are responsible for the daily turning on and off of the mini-translators which relay television signals within a three-to-five-mile radius of the village.