

RURAL FUEL LACK AGGRAVATED

If Waddy's Ruling Is Upheld Rural Energy Situation Can Worsen

By MARC OLSON

The recent decision by a federal judge prohibiting the transportation of certain types of fuels by air could aggravate the already serious problems of fuel shortage in rural Alaska.

U.S. District Judge Waddy recently ruled invalid government waivers that permitted Alaskan air carriers to transport fuels to rural villages, saying that such transport must be stopped immediately.

Presently, though, it is "business as usual," since an attorney of Alaska International Air requested a stay in the order, which was granted by the Court of Appeals, until a hearing can be held.

Recent news reports have implied that many rural villages, which depend solely on air transport for all supplies, would receive no fuel at all if the Washington judge's decision to invalidate the waivers is sustained.

If the decision to invalidate the waivers is upheld, which most believe doubtful, the situation could be serious.

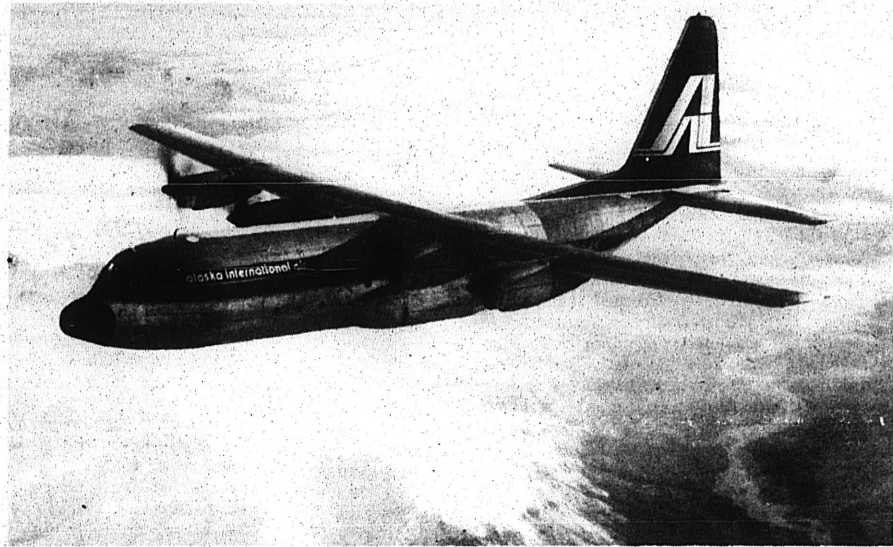
According to an official of the FAA, the Harmful Substance Act, to which the waivers were granted, does not necessarily apply to heating and diesel fuel. Other, more volatile substances, such as motor and aviation fuel, would be affected.

A spokesman for Alaska International Air, the largest carrier of fuel in Alaska, and in the world, said that the majority of fuel transported by AIA is diesel, not affected by the court ruling.

AIA carries all types of fuel, from diesel and motor fuels, to other petroleum products such as motor oil, hydraulic fluid, and anti freeze.

A campaign is forming to protest the loss of the waivers,

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AIA HERCULES — Huge aircraft, such as the one shown, is used by the Alaska International Air to transport bulk fuel to Alyeska pipeline and to some villages that have adequate landing fields that can accommodate such planes. Much of the fuel is transported by small planes to smaller villages.

— Photo by ROBERT LASCLOTZ

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spearheaded by the Alaska Energy Office, according to Mary Stachelrodt, energy planner for Rural Alaska Community Action Program in Anchorage.

She said that all interested and affected persons are urged to get involved, and to write to the Alaska Energy Office.

Stachelrodt received a telegram from Senator Stevens saying that he had protested the decision of Judge Waddy, asking that he reconsider. It was later reported, Stevens warned, that this decision might disrupt the schedule of the trans-Alaska pipeline.

An AIA official also spoke of the possible affect of the ruling on the pipeline, citing the fact that

air transport is much faster than carrying fuel on trucks, and cheaper on longer hauls. One Hercules aircraft can carry the same amount of fuel as three large tanker trucks.

Hearings on the ruling have not yet been scheduled, but will probably come soon. In the meantime, fuel is being transported without difficulties related to loss of waivers.

Larry Anderson, of AIA, stated that Alaska "depends of air transport," and that the Hercules is "the backbone of construction" in Alaska, summed it up by saying "we will do everything we can to continue flying fuel."