

Point Hope phone out for one year

By Carl Berger
Kotzebue

POINT HOPE, ALASKA--It has been more than a full year since the residents of this community at the western edge of the North Slope Borough have enjoyed reliable telephone service to the rest of Alaska and the lower 49 states, despite the fact that their satellite dish has been in place since last fall in the new village site.

Point Hope also shares the distinction--along with Pt. Lay, Karluk, and Ruby--of being the last of 68 villages scheduled under phase 2 of RCA Alaska's bush expansion plans to be "turned up" for service.

A spokesman for RCA Alaska, Bill Maguire, explained the situation this way: Connecting the bush satellite telephone at Pt. Hope depends mainly on two factors; (1) Having heated space available for our equipment, and (2) A reliable power supply for the telephone.

Once we receive assurances of these conditions from the village, through AFN Tele-Communications delegate for the North Slope Borough--Mr. Kent Gringe of Barrow-- we can have a crew in the village within a week to make final installation and adjustments and nor-

mally the telephone would be turned up for service the following week. RCA also said they are prepared to rent the heated space from the village and pay for the power, even providing their own electric meter when they make the final hook-up.

In the meantime the former telephone and equipment remain at the old village site, in a building half left behind in the village mover, open to the elements without power. And the phone out of order. There is a single sideband radio at the health clinic to be used for medical traffic to the PHS hospital at Kotzebue, and another SSB radio at the principal teacher's house at the old village to contact the school district at Barrow.

Both radios however, are unreliable due to weather and atmospheric conditions. This leaves few alternatives to this community of 450 but to walk or drive to the airstrip, almost two miles from the village, to send a message with a pilot or to make extensive use of KOTZ radio in Kotzebue for incoming messages.

And so Pt. Hope and Pt. Lay remain the last two communities in NW Alaska to go without any kind of reliable telephone

service. Maguire of RCA said he would welcome the views of the village councils regarding this problem, his address: Bill Maguire, RCA Public Affairs, 4489 Business Park Blvd., Anchorage, Alaska 99502.

Regardless of the outcome, Pt. Hope and now been assigned a telephone number for the first time, it is: 362-8001. For Pt. Lay it is: 628-8001. Hopefully the working telephones will soon follow.