

RurAL-CAP winterization program

The end of winter sometimes leaves one with the impression that everything is the same as it has always been. While things may be the same in some places, in the Chignik fisheries area on the Alaskan Peninsula they are not.

During the cold and dark of this last winter, a RurAL CAP-sponsored home winterization program came to the five villages in the area, and is now nearing completion.

As one of the original Alaskan target areas for Federal winterization funds, the villages of Perryville, Ivanof Bay, Chignik, Chignik Lagoon and Chignik Lake may not look a lot different now than they did a year ago, but if you check any of the 60 homes involved in the program you will notice changes.

There's new plywood on the ceiling, and hidden above that is new insulation. You may even spot a new door complete with weatherstripping, or skirting around the bottom of the house, and if you feel like looking beyond the skirting you may find some new insulation nestled right up under the floor.

A once hollow wall is now filled with insulation, and a new thermal pane window over in the corner which was not there before has been installed.

A weatherized home often does not look very different for much of the work takes place in spaces, like the attic, that you do not often see. The purpose for winterizing a home is to save fuel, and it is here that a change is noticeable. Stories of fuel savings ranging from 20% to 60% have been told to RurAL CAP staff by people residing in the Chignik area. Solid documentation of such fuel savings is now being gathered.

The Chignik target area has been an important learning ground for RurAL CAP because it brought into the open problems that will have to be dealt with in other bush locations where the program may be started up. RurAL CAP discovered that a preliminary housing survey must be comprehensive and precise so proper materials can be ordered. Given the sketchy transportation network existing in the remote parts of the state it is important to order all the materials at one time and get them transported in bulk.

"In the village of Chignik we didn't have good surveys, says Jack Easterbrook, Assistant Energy Coordinator at RurAL CAP, and the result was that four different barge deliveries from Kodiak were required. Materials kept dribbling in a little at a time, which makes it

difficult to perform work on the homes and also costs more."

Logistical problems exist even if surveys are complete, however. The village of Chignik received materials via barge from Kodiak, while Chignik Lake had materials flown in from Anchorage through Port Heiden.

"This turned out to be more expensive, but was the only choice we had, reports Easterbrook. Chignik Lagoon, Perryville, and Ivanof Bay were able to use local suppliers to obtain needed materials, but one supplier--Perryville Commercial--was thereby placed in the position of air freighting and boating materials in to keep the village crews busy.

No matter how you cut it, somebody has to deal with the difficult problem of moving materials."

While you can never entirely do away with logistical problems in rural Alaska, it seems that the time you pick to move materials makes a difference.

Mary Stachelrodt, Deputy Director at RurAL CAP, stated, "We received the money from CSA in late summer and it was freeze-up by the time we really got going. Trying to move materials in the winter is

difficult at best. I remember having a chartered DC-6 loaded and ready to go to Port Heiden, but it was unable to take off due to a storm in Port Heiden closing the long runway; the one we needed. The plow in Port Heiden was broken and by the time the runway was cleared the plane had been unloaded and had gone on to make other deliveries. It took several weeks to finally get the material out of Anchorage."

In spite of such problems, the program in the Chignik area has proven a success, reports Easterbrook. "The crews in the villages did a remarkable job, and remember they did a lot of work at the worst time of the year; December, March, April.

We all knew this was not the best time to do it, but it was all we had. Bill Lind (Council President, Chignik Lake) told me everyone is pretty happy with the program now that it's about finished." Mary Stachelrodt agrees, "I hope we never have to get involved in a winter time program again."

Whether the salmon run this summer is good or bad, many people living in the Chignik area will have one less concern next fall. Their fuel bills will be lower and their homes warmer because of proper winterization.