

RCA spans communication gap



The new Bush Earth Station at Noorvik, Alaska.

—RCA COMMUNICATIONS PHOTO

First telephone call made from village of Noorvik to Juneau via RCA Satcom

Advanced satellite technology spanned the communications gap in many remote rural villages of Alaska on Friday. Lt. Governor Lowell Thomas, Jr. inaugurated service with the first telephone call from the village of Noorvik to Governor Jay S. Hammond in Juneau via RCA Satcom I orbiting some 22,300 miles in outer space.

RCA Alaska Communications, Inc., in agreement with the State of Alaska, set out late last summer to introduce telephone communications in every Alaskan community of 25 or more people by constructing at least 100 small earth stations—with 15-foot diameter antennas—throughout the state. In accord with the state on the locations, Alascom field crews visited 20 bush villages.

They worked throughout the sub-zero winter months north of the Arctic Circle and deep in Alaska's panhandle to lay the foundations and install the facilities for the first earth stations. Joining Governor Hammond in Juneau to receive the first call, Alascom President Ben W. Agee hailed the start of satellite service under the program as a dramatic moment in state communications history.

He said: "The inauguration of satellite communications in Noorvik through the use of the first of some 100 small earth stations that will be constructed throughout rural Alaska represents a major milestone for the people of the state."

Mr. Agee stated further: "The program demonstrates what can be accomplished to modernize long line communications, and it banishes centuries old isolation with the outside world from

rural areas of Alaska."

In addition to Lt. Governor Thomas, NANA regional corporation officials, plus Noorvik Mayor Ike Jackson initiated calls to the capitol from the village earth station to speak with legislative leaders of both houses. Six of the first 20 small earth stations are located in the Kotzebue area.

(Continued on Page 6)

RCA spans . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Satellite communications service was also scheduled to start at Kivalina, Noatak, Shungnak, Savoonga, Tanunak, Toksook Bay and Mekoryuk.

Service will be turned up at all 20 of the first earth stations in May upon the successful completion of engineering tests.

The initial circuit capacity for each station is eight channels, but two channels will be used initially to provide each village with a dial telephone for public use and emergency medical service for the Alaska Native Health Service.

P e n d i n g F e d e r a l Communications Commission authorization, Alascom field crews will be dispatched to the bush in June to start laying the foundations and installation for additional small earth stations this year.

The villages for this second phase of the program were selected by both the State Office of Telecommunications and Alascom in accordance with the recommendations of the Telecommunications Advisory Committee of the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Native Health Service.