

Murkowski calls for study of fallout effect on Arctic

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Although relieved that the nuclear accident in the Soviet Union apparently poses no immediate serious problem to Alaskans, Senator Frank Murkowski said he remains concerned about the long-term effects the radiation fallout may have in the Arctic.

Murkowski was briefed Wednesday by Lee Thomas, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and informed that based on preliminary information, any radiation fallout that reaches Alaska should not be a threat to human health or to the environment.

Thomas was appointed by President Reagan to head an interagency task force monitoring the effects of the Soviet radiation disaster.

However, Murkowski called on the Department of Energy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Science Foundation, and the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee to undertake emergency research efforts to monitor and study the longterm effects of the Soviet nuclear disaster on Alaska and America's Arctic region.

"Alaska residents have already been exposed to abnormally high levels of radiation dating back to Soviet above-ground nuclear tests in the 1950s," said Murkowski. "We have data which proves that Arctic tundra lichen preserves and holds radioactivity.

"This is clearly a potential hazard to human health because radiation re-

tained by lichen is passed on to caribou and reindeer that eat the lichen, eventually finding its way to people who consume the caribou and reindeer."

The Department of Energy, through its Environmental Health Program, and NOAA, through its Global Monitoring of Climatic Change facility in Barrow, Alaska, have monitoring capabilities that can be used for comprehensive monitoring of the Soviet radiation fallout.

Murkowski also said a plan should be developed for the capability for addressing this nuclear disaster and future radiation fallout. He has asked the National Science Foundation, as the lead federal agency for Arctic research, along with the President's Arctic Research Commission and the interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee, to develop the new plan.

The Arctic Research Policy Commission was created under legislation

by Murkowski to develop a research policy and a comprehensive program for America's Arctic region.