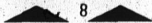


New Alaska Three digital channel launched

Educational, vocational and medical services will be extended across Alaska on a new video channel known as Alaska Three using the State of Alaska's digital satellite delivery system. The new service, part of the continuing development of Alaska's telecommunications infrastructure, was announced recently by a group of southwest Alaska and University of Alaska educators. Funded by the federal National Telecommunications and Information Administration with matching funds from

the University of Alaska, the channel is expected to be up and running in time for fall classes.

"The innovative delivery system shows promise as a real-time solution for educators and health-care providers trying to provide educational services via telecommunications throughout Alaska," said Bob Medinger, executive chair of the Southwest Alaska Distance Delivery Consortium (DDC).



Alaska Three funded . . .

Continued from page 1

This new method of delivering courses and instructional materials uses the digital equipment installed over the past year by rural residents and public television to reduce costs and improve service. The Satellite Interconnection Project has multiple uplinks which eventually will allow Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks and Juneau to reach learners across the state using AT&T Alascom's Aurora II satellite.

Together with the University of Alaska Learning Cooperative and the UAF-Kuskokwim campus, Alaska Three developers plan to explore the many learning opportunities offered by the new digital system, said April Crosby, assistant to the president of the university.

"We do not intend to limit ourselves to broadcasting traditional classroom instruction as found in many technology-delivered courses," Crosby emphasized. "Through federal grants from the National Telecommunica-

tions and Information Administration (NTIA), the support of the university, community-based organizations like the DDC and participation by AT&T Alascom, local phone companies like Unicom and the State of Alaska, much of the vital infrastructure is in place. We now have the ability to create and deliver the courseware of the future in a cost-effective and reliable manner."

Alaska Three is the fourth video service to be carried via satellite throughout Alaska by the Satellite Interconnect Project (SIP). The SIP restructured public telecommunications in rural Alaska. "This is not just about TV anymore," said Mark Badger, director of the Division of Information Services, the state office is in charge of developing the satellite technology. "SIP helps provide for the basic infrastructure needs of all Alaskans. This opens Alaska to the forefront of technology-enhanced education as well as the whole telecommunications arena."