

# 24 Villages Get Electric Power

Electrical power has been extended to 24 remote Alaskan villages this year according to a recent report of the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC).

By the end of 1970 the cooperative plans to be serving 59 communities with a combined population of 18,000 people, mostly Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts.

Some \$211,000 has thus far gone into the 24 villages to finance the installation and building of power plants, the wiring of houses, and the operating of trenching machines.

AVEC estimates the cost of constructing and installing generation and distribution facilities to be \$90,000 per community.

To cover these costs, the Rural Electrification Administration has loaned the cooperative \$5,205,000 for 35 years at a two per cent interest rate.

In addition, a \$750,000 grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity has been received for payroll and office expenses while the project is under construction.

The remote Alaskan villages to be reached by these funds represent the largest group of non-electrified communities in

the United States, according to AVEC manager W.C. Rhodes.

Working toward the goal that the electrical facilities will eventually be operated by the villagers, AVEC is currently conducting a training program at the University of Alaska's Anchorage Community College for plant operators. Usually two men from each village attend the sessions.

A plant operator is scheduled to be paid \$260 per month for about three hours work per day.

Plans for eventually serving the 59 communities call for 52 plant locations and about 97 miles of distribution line.

All transmission and distribution lines to the communities will be underground where possible to reduce maintenance problems for the widely scattered systems.

Charged with the responsibility of operating the electrical system, the city council of the village appoints a Utility Board to supervise the operations.

Through this board, the village oversees the installation of the electric distribution facilities, hires its own labor force and pays its employees.

The work is performed according to instructions and specifications furnished by AVEC,

which provides supervision and assistance when necessary.

Upon completion of the system, the cooperative pays the village on the basis of \$200 for each meter connection.

The hand tools and implements necessary to carry out the work are furnished by the cooperative and returned to it after the work is completed.

AVEC provides the training for the plant operators and allots money to the villages with which to pay such employees.

Members of the village in turn pay AVEC, whose central office is in Anchorage, for the electrical energy supplied to their homes.

However, the operation of the system remains under the supervision of the Utility Board elected by the villagers.

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