

# ***Buckland's still without electricity***

**by Jennifer Gordon**

**Tundra Times reporter**

For more than a week, the village of Buckland in the Northwest Arctic Borough has gone without electrical power. Telephones have worked sporadically, but temperatures of more than -100 with wind chill have played havoc with generators.

The water pump on Buckland's generator died on Jan. 19, early into the cold snap that has hit the state. A backup generator threw a rod from the cold.

On Sunday, Jan. 22, Jimmy Geary, the mayor of Buckland, and Willie Thomas, the former mayor, travelled to Kotzebue on snowmachine to ask

(Continued on Page Five)

# • Cold grounds small planes

(Continued from Page One)

for assistance. It took them 14 hours in -40 temperatures.

Brad Reeve, the director of Kotzebue Electric Association, volunteered his chief mechanic to work with the plant operator in Buckland. Kotzebue's city manager, Mike Scott, called the Emergency Operation Center, which in turn called the Alaska Power Authority.

Pat Woodell, development specialist for the APA, said she called APA engineers to discuss the possibilities of correcting the problem. She also called the National Guard in Kotzebue for assistance in flying the parts into the village.

The problem, however, was harder to solve than first realized.

Because of the cold, small planes have been grounded, and the forecast does not call for warmer temperatures soon. The National Weather Service said that temperatures were -40 on Thursday, with 18-knot winds, bringing the chill factor down to -102. Small planes are usually grounded once temperatures reach -30. Wind chill does not affect airplanes.

Tom Wardleigh, chairman of the Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation, said that sub-zero temperatures are hard on small planes. Plastic becomes brittle and tires can lose air. Jet planes can handle the cold better, he said, but they still have problems. Besides, Buckland's runway, 3,000 feet, is too short for a jet to land.

The military's Brimfrost '89 exercises have hampered the efforts of the National Guard, said Brad Reeve. Planes that are usually located in Kotzebue and can fly in sub-zero temperatures, have been dispersed around the state. The Twin-Otter, a turbine engine plane used by the Guard that is capable of handling the cold, is in Nome and unavailable at this time.

Kotzebue Electric Association's chief mechanic has also been unable to reach the village and has had to diagnose the problem through phone

calls — when the phones are working. Buckland does have a mechanic on site, but he has not had formal training in generator repair.

On Thursday, a water pump, oil seals and a generator belt were flown from Illinois into Kotzebue, but temperatures of below -40 were still too low to allow a plane to fly the equipment into Buckland.

During this crisis, many families have moved in with each other. Only a dozen houses are actually heated by electricity in the village. Most of the houses are older and use oil stoves.

Reeve said that so far food has not been a concern because most families live a subsistence lifestyle and have already stored food for the winter. There will be a crisis, however, if someone gets sick or injured, he said.

"Obviously life would be much easier if the power was on," Reeve said.