

Rural Development, Electrification Endangered By Crisis

The energy crisis and its effects on the State of Alaska was one of the topics under discussion at the November meeting of the Alaska Rural Development Council.

RurAL CAP staff member Stewart Carlo attended the sessions and commented that the State's presentation

essentially went over federal regulations and the problems faced in allocating fuel for various sectors of the economy. A 10% fuel reserve (oil, diesel, gas, etc.) is being held for emergencies.

Another presentation was given by Mr. January, Union Oil distributor manager for Alaska. He said that, like the State, they will try to distribute oil products according to public and still follow guidelines made by both State and federal regulations.

In explaining the oil company's position, Mr. January stated that the American society which represents 6% of the world population, uses 36% of the world energy.

Lloyd Hodson, General Manager of Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, told the group that some villages are going through a transitional economic development process where the use of fuel is becoming increasingly important for diesel generators supplying electricity.

There are 16 new area high schools that are to be provided with electric power by AVEC, but with a 15% cut in fuel allocations being made by the

State, Mr. Hodson explained that AVEC's ability to supply power to the new facilities would be in jeopardy.

In a recent resolution, bush air carriers have urged the federal government to ease the restrictive rationing and cut backs on aviation fuel because of the essential nature of transportation in rural Alaska, where there are no roads or adequate transportation system for medical emergencies, freight and mail deliveries, etc.

It is common practice that bush Alaska has to wait for a week or ten days, and in some cases even longer for service, due to weather and field conditions, and the poor transportation network currently existing.

These factors, compounded with drastic reductions in fuel allocations, will make these extraordinary waiting periods even longer, working severe hardship on the people living in extremely harsh winter conditions.

As this paper goes to press, Wien Alaska Airlines has announced that there will be no Sunday flights after the first of January, 1974.