

Women's Shelter
P.O. Box 38
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752
(907) 442-3969

Public Health Nursing
P.O. Box 170
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752
(907) 442-3313

Maniilaq Association

P.O. Box 256
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752
(907) 442-3311

Senior Citizens' Center
P.O. Box 260
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752
(907) 442-3590 or 3591

470.02.001
Health & Human Services
F.R. Ferguson Building
(907) 442-3313 or 3914

10-6-86

TO: Whom It May Concern

FROM: Jeff Weintraub, Sanitarian, Maniilaq Association

SUBJECT: Oil Spill Adjacent to Ambler Village Health Clinic

DATE: September 30, 1986

The following is a preliminary report on the Ambler oil spill.

Contacts:

Harry Oxereok-City Administrator
Lillian Johnson-CHA
Emily Douglas-Alternate CHA
City Laborers
Dick Warren-Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation,
Fairbanks

From September 23 to September 25 I was on a village trip to Ambler at which time I had an opportunity to investigate the oil spill.

The oil spill is in the area immediately west of the clinic building. A pipeline used by Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC) to fill fuel storage tanks from barge service on the Kobuk River runs parallel to the clinic approximately 15' distant. (See attached sketch). This pipeline is buried approximately 12" deep in the area near the clinic. A faulty pipe union in the section of pipeline adjacent to the clinic was the source of the oil spill.

Fuel oil odors were first noticed during the first week of September. It is suspected that the heavy rains this fall caused the fuel oil to migrate and rise to the surface of the ground. It was at this time that fuel oil odors were being noticed inside the clinic building.

MEMBER VILLAGES

Ivisaappaat, Nunatchiaq, Ipnatchiaq, Katyaak, Kivaliniq, Laugviik, Qikiqtagrak, Nautaaq, Nuurvik, Akuligaaq, Isinnaq

The corrective action taken by AVEC did not alleviate the odors in the clinic or remove the oil from the saturated soil in the spill area. A trench was dug along the pipeline and the faulty union repaired. Water and oil was seeping into this trench and was being pumped off into 55 gallon drums. From conversations with the workers involved with the pumping operation it was determined that at least 2,000 gallons of oil/water mix had been collected from this trench. The drums were being disposed of at the community dumpsite approximately 2 miles from the village. The saturated ground near the southwest corner of the clinic had been bladed and covered with 4" to 6" of soil. It could not be determined if any contaminated soil had been removed from this area.

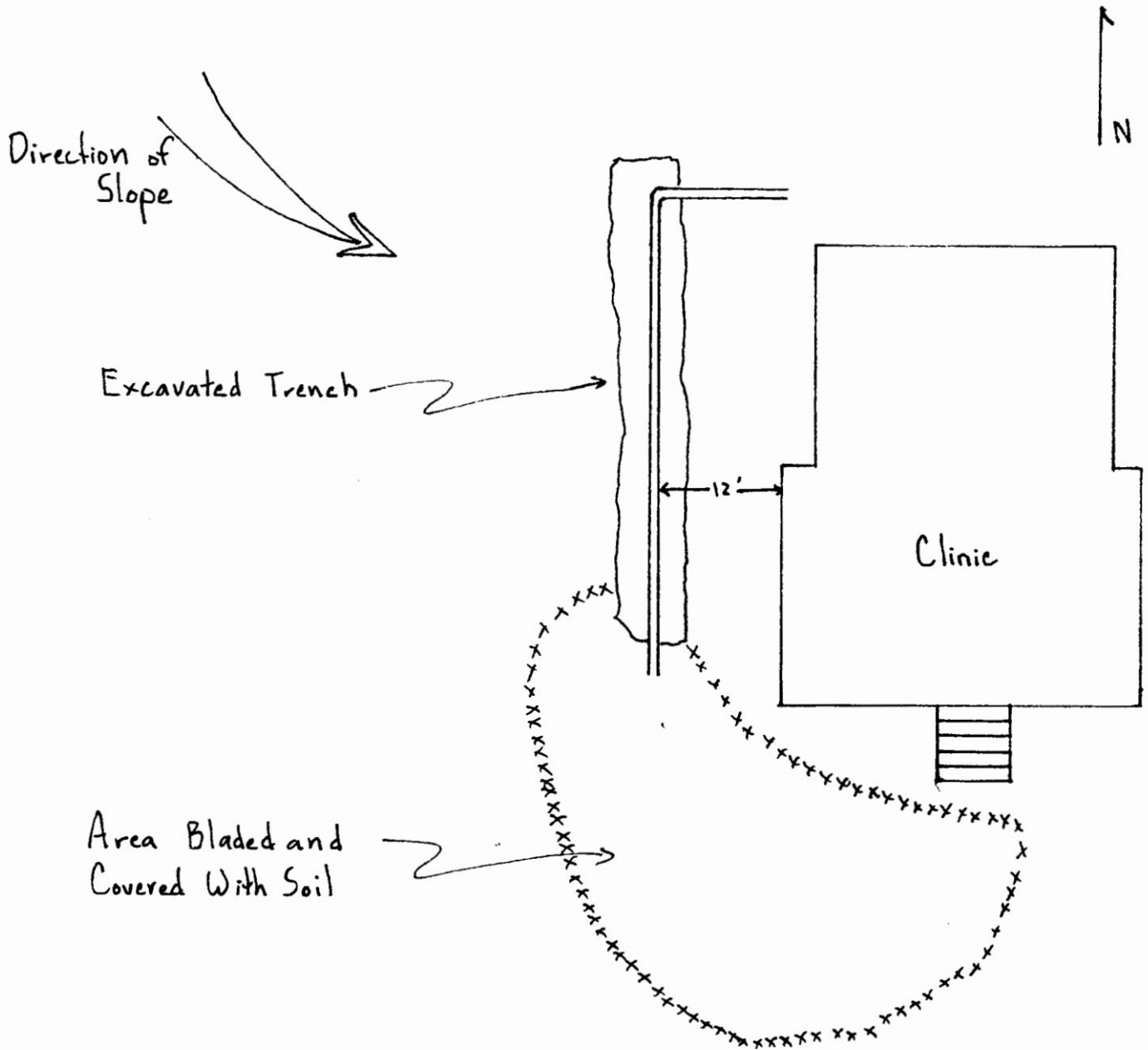
Because of the location of the spill and the slope of the ground the oil/water mix had migrated towards and possibly under the clinic. Fuel oil odors were very strong in the clinic. An hour spent in the clinic was enough to produce headaches and nausea. The odor was particularly strong in the toilet room. This is likely due to oil/water migration along the trench that carries the water and sewer service lines.

Because of the strong fuel oil odors it was recommended to the City Administrator and Health Aide that the clinic services be temporarily relocated. The new IRA building was deemed the best site available. This building does not have water or sewer service. Consequently, covered water containers with spigots and a honey bucket will need to be provided. It is estimated that a month to a month and a half will be required until the ground freezes sufficiently to hold the fuel oil vapors in check thus making the clinic usable again.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was notified of the spill. Clean-up strategies were discussed with DEC and this information has been forwarded to the city. Due to the onset of winter a thorough and effective clean-up process is unlikely to be completed this fall.

For any additional information please call me at 442-3311 ext. 185.

Ambler Fuel Oil Spill - September 1986



Drawing To Approximate Scale