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NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL RECOURSES

Whitehorse, Y. T.,
27th February, 1956

Col. C. Y. Farrel, C.E.,
District Engineer
Alaska District,
Corps of Engineers,
FAIRBANKS, Alaska

Dear Col. Farrel:

I understand that considerable difficulty has been experienced in the operation of the Haines-Fairbanks pipeline due to ice blocking the passage of the fuel. In clearing the line it has been necessary to cut it in a number of places to remove the ice with the result that a certain quantity of jet fuel has been spilled on the ground at each cut. I am also informed that orders have been given that the fuel should be burned as soon as possible after it has been released.

Your Project Engineer, Mr. Spangler, and Safety Engineer, Mr. King, together with our Forest Engineer Mr. Wilson, have recently inspected several of these cuts at one of which the fuel had been burned. At the points where fuel had been released and on the ground two weeks it was difficult to ignite the fuel and combustion only continued when the ground was stirred up by hand. Where the fuel had been burned soon after it had been released there was evidence of an extremely hot fire, covering considerable area. Green frozen trees had been burned completely through and the fire was still smouldering in the berm sixteen days after the burning had been done. Fires in berm and muskeg are very difficult to extinguish and often lie undetected until the warm dry weather of early summer provides conditions suitable for rapid spread.

It would appear that evaporation would remove the greater part of the fuel before spring and that the remainder will leach away harmlessly into the ground. Even if there is a slight residual hazard it still requires a source of ignition to cause a forest fire. Where the fuel is burned this course of ignition is gratuitously provided.

Due to the high percentage of the snowfall which is removed by evaporation in the area where the cuts are made together with the peculiar flash-flood type of stream flow found there it is felt that stream pollution is not a factor.

Taking these facts into consideration I would request that the burning of the spilled fuel be discontinued. It would be appreciated also if steps can be taken to extinguish completely the fire already set. A patrol of the area after the onset of warm weather would also be desirable. Any assistance from our Forestry staff which you may require in this matter will be available on request.

Yours truly,

/s/ F. H. Collins
Col. F. H. Collins,
Commissioner.

GMW/wc
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