

AVEC Members Receive Wind Turbine Training

by Amy Murphy

Imagine having to climb up a 108' ladder inside an eight'-wide, enclosed tower in order to get to your "office." That is exactly what trained technicians do to perform routine maintenance and make repairs to AVEC's wind turbines when they quit working.

In conjunction with AVEC's wind power program, the following eight men recently received training to become certified technicians and learn to climb these towers: Charles Green Sr. of Tununak; Norman Abraham George John of Toksook Bay; Lawrence Lake and Julius Douglas Bell of Hooper Bay; Francis Bell Jr. and Elias Friday of Chevak; David Akeye of Savoonga; and Bryant Koonooka of Gambell.

"I used to be afraid of heights," said Charles Green Sr. "But I overcame that fear during some hands-on training in Toksook Bay when I climbed up the towers to do some maintenance and repair work. It was a dirty job but it was fun!"

The all-expense paid, week-long training took place in Barre, Vermont at the Northern Power manufacturing facility, which supplies the Northwind 100 turbines AVEC primarily uses.

*Top row: Lawrence Lake (left) and Elias Friday.
Bottom row: David Akeye (left) and Francis Bell.*



"The trainees learned how to service and troubleshoot the turbines and they all did really well during the final hands-on exam," said Chris Haraldsen of Northern Power. Norman from Toksook Bay was automatically put to the test when he returned home and one of their three turbines quit working. "Norman discovered that a PLC card failed and by exchanging e-mail messages and phone calls we figured out which parts were needed. They were shipped out and the turbine got running again."

Having local technicians trained to work on these turbines provides a source of local income and saves a tremendous amount of time and money by not having to fly trained technicians in from far-away places. These technicians live in villages that either have wind turbines or have plans to install them in the future.

"This is the second round of training and we now have 16 trained technicians all together," said Dave Myers of STG Inc. "This very valuable training program enables community members to take a leading role in the operation and maintenance of the wind turbines installed in their respective communities."

AVEC appreciates the efforts of our many dedicated partners who have made our entire wind program so successful, including the Denali Commission, STG Inc, and Northern Power, which provided exemplary training and went above and beyond the call of duty by entertaining the trainees during the evenings.

The Alaskans returned the favor and did some entertaining as well. One evening while eating at a local restaurant, Charles and Francis got up and sang some Native songs and performed traditional dances. Everybody



Top: looking up the ladder technicians climb to reach the top of the 108'-tall wind tower.

Below: looking down from the top of the "office," viewing the ladder that descends to the bottom of the narrow tower.



in the restaurant thoroughly enjoyed the spontaneous performance.

"This training was really beneficial," said Charles Green Sr. "Thanks to AVEC for giving me this opportunity to learn new skills and a new career." Tununak's runway was down, but Charles was so determined to receive this training he rode over to Toksook Bay by snowmachine to catch a flight from there.

AVEC would also like to thank everybody involved in this training program, including the participants who took the time to attend training.

A worker attaches a blade assembly to the wind turbine main shaft while securely hanging more than 100' in the air.

