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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 15, 2011

No. 11-14

### **Proactive Approach Helping Rural Alaska Stay Warm**

Anchorage, Alaska – A state program designed to ensure that rural Alaska communities have an adequate supply of home-heating fuel is headed into its third year.

The Fuel Watch program is implemented by the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development through its Division of Community and Regional Affairs. Fuel Watch came about as a means of preventing the fuel shortages and hardship experienced by many rural communities in the winter of 2008-09.

DCRA staff will be contacting nearly 350 rural bulk fuel purchasers to verify that fuel supplies are delivered for the upcoming winter. Last year, DCRA staff made more than 850 phone calls to communities and suppliers.

“The outreach has significantly reduced the number of fuel shortages,” said Susan Bell, commissioner of the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. “The program helps our department build greater awareness of our community development programs and stronger relationships throughout Alaska.”

DCRA officials are also working with fuel delivery companies and rural communities to identify where technical or financial assistance may be needed. Communities with limited financial resources can apply for financing through private financing or state loan programs.

“Ensuring that rural communities have the fuel to keep utilities running and residents warm in the winter is part of our division’s mission to promote healthy and safe communities,” said DCRA Director Scott Ruby. “Topping off tanks or scheduling fall deliveries has already begun. Identifying problems and addressing them before they become an emergency benefits everyone.”

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