

Air Quality Concerns at the Wonderland of Ice

The recent story that ran on the Today Show provided a sensationalized account of one of the major issues that ice rink operators deal with on a daily basis – indoor air quality in enclosed arenas. Although this piece would have been a very timely story twenty years ago, following the energy crisis of the 1980's, the conclusions that were drawn by the reporters are quite dated in today's ice arena industry.

Over the past two decades, a significant amount of research has been done on air quality in indoor ice arenas, including an extensive study conducted by the Harvard University of Public Health, the results of which have been extensively distributed within our industry members. The number of incidents resulting from indoor air quality issues has dropped dramatically over the last decade, as a result of research and education and every known air quality incident in an ice arena, to date, has been caused by human error.

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, as a byproduct of combustion, is a very real health threat in an indoor ice rink, just as it is in your car and in your home. With the proper design, care and maintenance, fuel powered ice resurfacers can be safely utilized in any ice arena. However, to insure the safety of our patrons, the Wonderland of Ice purchased our first electric ice resurfacing machine (Zamboni) in 1998. We like to think of it as a 30th birthday present for our "Old" rink. The battery powered Zamboni, coupled with sixteen exhaust fans, enable us to provide a safe environment in what is now known as the Stadium rink.

Our second electric Zamboni was purchased in 2005 prior to the opening of the New rink. Our back up Zamboni does run on propane, which is the cleanest burning fuel available. You may have seen this machine on line in the New rink of late, as we have just completed a repair on one of the electrics. The New rink is equipped with a state of the art exhaust and air exchange system, in which sensors are wall mounted and hard wired to trigger the exhaust fans at preprogrammed thresholds, completely eliminating the possibility of simple human error.

Combustion emissions are only one component of the air quality challenges in any ice arena. Mold, mildew and bacteria growth all have an affinity for cold, damp surfaces. The Wonderland of Ice has taken two major steps to insure your safety concerning these pathogens. First we have installed desiccant dehumidification in both the New and the Stadium rinks. These units not only keep the humidity levels low, but also introduce fresh outside air into the building envelope after it has been pre-treated for moisture, thus creating a hostile environment for the incubation of these irritants. To take this one step further, in the fall of 2009 we also treated all of the locker rooms, players boxes, bathrooms, snack bar and lobby common areas with a non-toxic, anti-microbial product that is guaranteed to eliminate 99.9% of all illness causing microorganisms, bacteria and germs, including the deadly MERSA virus for three years. Our one year swab test conducted in December, 2010, showed the product was working perfectly. For more information on the product, you can go to www.csggrp.com

If you still have concerns about your safety while patronizing the Wonderland of Ice, it should make you sleep better to know that we were awarded the 2010 Excellence in Ice Arena Safety Award by the Willis Insurance Company. Willis is the preferred provider of insurance of the Ice Skating Institute. Also, as your General Manager, I have personally undergone extensive training and testing and I am one of eight industry professionals in the nation, who have been awarded the distinction of being named Certified Arena Executives (CAE) by the Ice Arena Institute of Management, I am also a member of their teaching faculty and I sit on their board of trustees.

At the Wonderland of Ice the safety of you and your family is our number one priority!

Lisa Fedick, CAE