

CLEARING the AIR

Misinformation, lack of education can lead to serious problems

BY AARON PAITICH

Indoor air quality education and monitoring continues to be an issue.

Recent news articles regarding poor indoor air quality at ice arenas have prompted rink managers to get their ice resurfacers tuned up. While assuring quality air in arenas shouldn't stop there, more often than not, it does.

Are rink managers doing enough to ensure air quality is a high priority?

LSK Enterprises Vice President Ray LaFond believes more can be done.

"Once you understand how simple it is to maintain and monitor, it's a no-brainer," LaFond said.

It will cost a little money and take time to educate and train employees, but it will also save a facility's reputation, not to mention protect the well-being of hundreds and even thousands of people filtering through arenas daily.

In many cases, the ice resurfacer can be sending out too much carbon monoxide or nitrogen dioxide that may create an air quality issue. But having your resurfacer tested only measures what's coming out of your machine, not the overall air quality of your facility.

It is very important to ensure your machines and equipment are producing



RINK PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

acceptable emissions. It is equally important to ensure your facility has the proper ventilation.

Ventilation

Like water filling a glass, gases accumulate in your facility, just like in your own home. Every time your ice resurfacer goes out and produces emissions, it's just filling that glass. The only way to empty it is with holes.

"Pour water in a glass, come back in an hour and it's still going to be there unless there's a hole," LaFond said.

By not changing the air out from in the rink, oxygen will be diluted out with these other gases.

Most people believe they already have the answer: a dehumidifier. But a dehumidifier just removes moisture from the air. It does not defuse the gases, it just re-circulates and dries the air. Ice arenas need the introduction of fresh, clean air from outside.

Many dehumidifiers have fresh-air introduction as part of its operations, but not all of them. Be sure to find out.

Testing

Most people have carbon monoxide detectors in their own homes.

Why are they not in our rinks?

"You want to be able to say, yes, my carbon monoxide level is at an acceptable reading. My nitrogen dioxide level is at an acceptable level. I'm in a good place," LaFond said.

Ice arenas have heating systems, ice edgers and other fossil-fuel burning equipment that may contribute to poor indoor air quality. Don't just check your ice resurfacers, test your air quality – and test it regularly.

Independent meters will help identify a problem before it escalates, allowing you to get it checked out by professionals. You can typically buy carbon monoxide meters for between \$200 and \$600, and

they will have to be calibrated. Hand-held meters need to be calibrated, because the sensors in the meter will fail over time.

Draeger tubes are another option for rink managers, which consists of sealed tubes you pop open to sample the air. It looks like a thermometer and some people prefer draeger tubes because they don't go out of calibration.

These meters should test the overall air quality of the facility, not emissions directly from your machines.

Education

Rink managers need to understand and investigate their air handling systems, such as ducts, heating, etc.

Anything that burns fuel will give off gases. And the recent incident in Rhode Island you've probably been reading about? It had nothing to do with carbon

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monoxide, it was nitrogen dioxide.

Carbon monoxide is not the only gas you should be worried about.

The regular heater in your house could give off gases in an ice rink. Even if ice resurfacers are perfect, other machines and poor ventilation can pollute the air. That's why rink managers need to be testing with independent meters and rigorously logging the statistics.

In Massachusetts, if an inspector

comes by, sees your air quality is adequate, but doesn't find a detailed log filled out by rink employees – the facility could be punished severely.

For more literature and guidelines, pay attention to what the State of Massachusetts has done. Go online and check out their regulations and guidelines. There is a complete booklet to follow.

Remember, it's not only rink managers that need to get educated. That knowledge needs to be passed down to each employee.

It's a team effort that begins with the rink managers setting the standard and holding employees accountable. Get proactive and start testing your air.

"It will cost money," LaFond said. "But a lawsuit's going to cost you a hundred times more." ★

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