

5 Years of REALice at the Fuller Lake Arena, North Cowichan, BC

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At Fuller Lake Arena, North Cowichan, BC we have been **using Real Ice for a few years. The unexpected discovery for us, was how big the power savings are.**

When the system was first installed, I had instructed my staff to do everything wrong and not to follow the instructions. I wanted to know what would happen.

We found out that that the system is pretty flexible. Since we have started using the system, we have learned that **it takes a little longer to fill the resurfacer and we may drive a little slower on the ice.**

When filling the resurfacer the water can't be dribbled since the REAL Ice needs full **water pressure** to do its job and we make sure the fill hoses are not kinked.

Normally we use 60°F water or ground water temp water when the outside temperature is not too cold. If the water freezes too fast because of cold outside temperatures or our augers freezes up, we temper the water up to 80°F.

We can fill the machine at the end of an ice clean to be ready to go for next clean, this helps speed things up if the fill takes too long. At end of night we are also filling up again and leave the water for the opening shift in the morning.

We had to find a new slab temperature as our ice froze too fast. Our slab temp is now 5 to 6 degrees higher all the time now. Before, we ran a 15°F slab temp, today we are set at 21°, we normally run at 20°F.

We had put this system in, hoping to save natural gas on our hot water tank. I didn't think, we would see much of a savings on the ice plant. I was wrong. **The hero of this story is the power savings.**

I would come to work and see the condenser not running so I would go and check the ice plant, expecting having to reset something but I could not find anything wrong. I would look at ice temps and saw that the slab temp was satisfied with nothing needing to run.

I went out to check an ice clean, expecting wet ice but all was fine. This was a bit hard to get used too.

I do not see our power bill to compare but **our ice plant is off more than it is on and I understand we are in the thousands a month savings.**

Real Ice was installed in two other rinks close to us and we jumped on board a season later, telling no one.

We asked a chosen few hockey and figure skating people how the ice was and their comments came back as normal and they did not know we had switched yet.

We did have a problem with changing the thinking process of older ice makers, me included, but by the end of the first season, we did not even think about it anymore.

At the end of the season a figure skating coach complained about ice at another arena.

She was asking why the other arena wouldn't have as good as ice as ours, blaming the cold water floods. We told her that we use the cold water floods also. Her jaw hit the floor.

The hockey players finally asked us why we were always inquiring with them about the ice quality. Finally, we told them that we switched. They said that they did not see any difference.

We have had some difficulties with net pegs staying in place as ice is denser but this is not a problem for us.

After two seasons, I went to our 6 ice makers and asked if they wanted to go back to hot water floods or stay with the REALice system. They said, why would we want to switch back?

So for us, we learned to read the ice, thick, thin, hard or too cold by looking at it. Decide on what we needed to do and go do it. Clogging issues for us are doing too light a cut when it's cold outside or the slab temp is too cold, we will raise slab 1 or 2 degrees or may cut a little more, we may use the wash water or not when cold, it may help.

We had clogging issues with hot water floods so clogging is not a new thing. Try something, do something different and see if it works, some places may not have any problems.

We have a 51-year-old single sheet arena and our problems may be our own. Our staff has the ability to alter ice temps, cut or flood as needed.

I realize some arenas (I want to put this politely) have ice cleaners not ice makers but ice makers are made and staff needs to have training and coaching, the ability to try and within reason change things to find out if it will work and what will happen, to learn to be an ice maker.

If management wants to lock the blade adjustment so only light cuts are made and will not let staff adjust the ice temps, then staff cannot improve and all of this is for not. Be brave and ask about settings and how you run the resurfacer, how to think on your feet.

Don't overthink the REALice system just figure out a new slab temp.

Every facility is different, in seating size, old or new facility.

I have been asked a few times, how to find a good ice temp and what slab temps we run. My answer is simple: Do an ice clean. Did it freeze up and are there no complaints?

Then that's a good start.