

Every food code in Canada and the U.S. defines ice as a food yet there is little oversight over packaged ice. As a food product, packaged ice is not only important for consumers maintaining today's active lifestyle and health, but also critical for food processing and emergency relief operations.

Ice...the Forgotten Food is a slogan borrowed from the International Packaged Ice Association (IPIA). The IPIA has used this slogan for many years in an attempt to draw the attention of all government officials, both Canadian and U.S., and to develop legislation that creates food safety standards for the packaged ice industry. The IPIA, founded in 1917, is an association of over 400 packaged ice manufacturers and distributors with locations in North America that serves all provinces in Canada and states in the US.

raising the bar for food safety in the packaged ice industry. The Canadian ice producers that are members of the CAII must follow the IPIA guidelines as well and have their food safety audits routinely done annually according to the PIQCS standard.

Recently, the IPIA began to have success in the U.S. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) formally recognized that packaged ice is a food product and the U.S. Congress directed the FDA to issue a food "fact sheet" informing the public about existing regulations that apply to ice manufacturers. Several states, Florida and Montana for example, have also increased their oversight of pack-



THE PACKAGED ICE INDUSTRY IN CANADA

In Canada, the Canadian Association of Ice Industries (CAII), a chapter of the IPIA, has taken steps to advance packaged ice safety. In the fall of 2002, the CAII was approached by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to fund the writing of a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) food safety program for the packaged ice industry. Our journey started in the spring of 2003 after funding was approved. We assembled a team of industry members, HACCP experts, and water experts. We met in Kingston, Ontario six times a year for the next two years and discussed the many food safety aspects of processing and producing packaged ice including water quality, the freezing process, the packaging, the warehousing and the distribution of the end product. The finished document was approved for implementation in the spring of 2005 at a meeting in Ottawa. And this is where things stand today; ice has become the forgotten food again. Without follow-up legislation requiring ice processors to use the document, the food safety standards are merely an expensive recommendation.

To compare, because of little or no manufacturing oversight on the local, state or federal level, the

IPIA developed its own food safety program, the Packaged Ice Quality Control Standards (PIQCS). It is very similar to the standards that the CFIA developed but is industry self-regulating. In order to have membership in the IPIA, companies must be audited by an independent auditor and pass inspection under the rigorous PIQCS standards, thus



aged ice production, especially for in-store operations. In the near future, it is expected that legislation will be approved to give the FDA power to implement a higher food safety standard in the U.S.

Such standards are the only way to protect consumers' health and eliminate contaminated ice being sold to the public. The CAII and the IPIA in no way object to any con-

Ice...(is still) the Forgotten Food

venience store, yacht club or market of any type, packaging ice. Our stance is that any establishment that packages ice for resale must adhere to a set of standards, just as with bottled water. The standards that CFI has developed should be passed and applied to all packaged ice in order to ensure a consistent safe packaged ice supply for the public.

There is still more work to be done. To help us or learn more, contact John Smibert at j.ice@sympatico.ca.

