



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH County of Riverside

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 22-06-DES

DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

ICE: THE FORGOTTEN FOOD

Contaminated ice has been the cause of a number of serious foodborne disease outbreaks. In 1987, 500 people became ill from contaminated ice in a single incident in Pennsylvania and Delaware. Bad water was the cause of that outbreak. But in others, the problem has been traced to improper handling, such as serving ice with dirty hands or contaminated utensils or a failure to thoroughly clean and sanitize the ice machines.

The Federal Food Code and the California Health and Safety Code include "ice" in the definition of food. We use ice in beverage to keep them cold, we eat it as a cold treat in snow cones or shaved ice, and we add it to many other dishes to keep them chilled and safe from bacteria.

Since ice is a food, it stands to reason it must be manufactured, handled, and served with the same care and precautions demanded of any other foods. It is a known fact that ice can "go bad". And bad ice can make people sick. Ice becomes contaminated if it is not kept clean and free of harmful bacteria. Studies have shown that bacteria can grow on ice.

The following guidelines have been prepared to help operators avoid contamination in ice making and prevent ice-borne diseases.

Management's Role/Employees' Obligation

Employees must wash and sanitize their hands thoroughly before scooping, bagging, or otherwise touching the ice. If they handle objects that are not clean or sanitized (making change, for example), they must wash their hands before returning to ice handling. Make sure the employee practices good hygiene and is wearing clean clothing.

Make sure the ice making operation is compatible with other functions the employee performs. Handling bait or pumping gas is not compatible with handling ice. The potential for cross-contamination is too great to permit the two operations to be conducted by the same person.

*Document available in an alternate format upon request