

## Canada

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## Dirty air in arenas could pose health risk: CBC investigation

Comments (24)

Monday, March 12, 2007 | 09:41 AM ET

The polluted air inside some Canadian hockey arenas could be putting children at risk, a CBC News investigation reveals.

The report found the exhaust that routinely streams out of ice resurfacing machines in skating arenas is to blame for high levels of tiny particles, which experts now say are having an effect on people who skate in rinks.

Jeff Brook, the senior research scientist with Environment Canada, is among dozens of scientists around the world beginning to study how ultrafine particle pollution is affecting people's health.

"We really should be trying to make attempts to minimize kids' exposure to ultrafine particles while waiting for more info to come in on their impacts," he said. [Full Story](#)

### How is the air in your arena?

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### Comments (24)

Allison

Calgary

It's not about banning Zamboni's or tearing down arenas. All we have to do is think about other options to keep arenas healthy for everybody. Electric Zamboni's are in use in some arenas, so why can't others at least think about it? We don't have to stop hockey to have cleaner air.

Posted March 13, 2007 08:50 PM

Betty Couture

My daughter Rosanna did a Grade 12 ISU on the topic of air quality in arenas. Many arenas have fans for ventilation but they do not turn them on. She played Junior AA hockey and started having trouble breathing in most arenas. She started using ventolin inhalers prior to each game. At an arena in Hamilton she actually had to come off the ice and be taken to emergency as her heart went into a very strange rhythm. Currently she is playing soccer in the USA while attending University and she no longer requires the use of inhalers.



Ice resurfacing machines in skating arenas release high levels of tiny particles into the air.  
(CBC)

Posted March 13, 2007 03:13 PM

Allan Eizinas

Simcoe

I guess that it is now official – living will eventually kill you!

Posted March 13, 2007 11:05 AM

terry

london

Hello out there...it appears that there is a great deal of anger and fed-up-ness...the solution is simple, efficient and certainly not too expensive (keep the applause down now!)...clean the air by oxidation....no dirt, no pollution and better oxygen air for the kids as well....besides we really don't want to deal with the "big farts"!

Posted March 13, 2007 10:18 AM

Maureen

Regina

I have a really easy solution to this problem - open the doors of the arenas and put the fans on.

It's like people using canned air fresheners in their houses and then worrying about the gases and fumes from them - OPEN A WINDOW! Even on the coldest day of the year in Regina (and it gets cold here) opening two windows 1" for 15 minutes will solve the problem of getting fresh air in the house.

Posted March 13, 2007 10:12 AM

allan

kamloops

Maureen, irrelevancy is a value judgment that seems out of place at the bottom of a post used to react and critique the story, relate numerous childhood episodes and then worry your tax dollars are being wasted in a CBC-led conspiracy to keep Ottawa afloat in tax revenues.

I think you meant to say "boring", but then all those relevant issues jumped onto the post.

Posted March 12, 2007 07:31 PM

Ray S

Let me see - dirty air in arenas that may cause all sorts of 'nasty things', helmets for toboggan use, skiing and bicycling to prevent head injuries, heart attack risk when shovelling snow, removal of monkey bars in children's playgrounds to prevent injuries - and the list of theoretical dangers goes on.

No wonder Canadians are increasingly out of shape. We listen to our nanny warders and avoid doing things - anything - because some academic, ivory tower fool has determined that some theoretically potential possible risk

might exist that just maybe could have a negative impact on our health (something like global warming I guess). Guess what? We ALL die at the end, so live a little, even if it kills you!

Posted March 12, 2007 04:40 PM

Maureen

Regina

So the CBC is telling us that the world is full of dangers - somehow many of us grew up riding in cars without seatbeats, tobogganing and bike riding without helmets, - I recall the best fun was jumping from the hay loft in my uncle's barn onto who knows what type of rusty equipment.

Did we get hurt - occassionally yes, but I don't recall anyone dying or even being seriously injured, but we did end up with a healthy respect for balancing risk with fun.

This is just another way for CBC to justify its existence and to scarce us into supporting (through taxes) more ways for government to interfere in our lives.

Didn't Macleans magazine just have a feature article on bubblewrapping our kids. CBC you are a little slow off the mark and once again have shown how irrelevant you are to most people.

Posted March 12, 2007 04:25 PM

BS

Vancouver

I believe it - but the air at a concert, with no ice, is just as bad. These buildings need to get serious about having more ventilation / air filtration.

Plus, I bet the problem at small arenas is worse, since not all their zamboni's are in good working order. In any case, a gas-powered forklift operating in a warehouse puts out as much emissions as you would get from a zamboni - but it gets way more attention when it comes to workplace safety rules regarding ventilation and emissions.

A stadium or small arena gets less scrutiny. If a zamboni could be powered electrically, that would be better, but I don't know if those exist or are even feasible.

But this alone doesn't solve the ventilation problem. David the engineer was right, and I suspect many arenas are just inadequate.

Posted March 12, 2007 03:51 PM

David Simic

This does not surprise me.

As a professional engineer who is involved in the design of HVAC systems, I always review the design of systems in arenas of various vintage. A common occurrence, is that the systems, more often than not, are always shut down.

Reasons for this is: (1) Utility costs are too high when we run systems, (2) Ice quality is affected when we run the

heating systems (3) There is no provision for conditioned make-up air when the systems are operated, ie, it is too cold if we run exhausts fans in the winter, (4) no training or procedures for the use of the ventilation equipment etc etc.

Part 4 of the Ontario Fire Code was revised in response to a death that occurred in an arena due to inadequate ventilation system design. Even with these design rules in place, if the occupant chooses not to operate the equipment, then air quality will suffer.

Posted March 12, 2007 02:35 PM

Allan Eizinas

Simcoe

Allow smoking again in the arenas and you won't smell the exhaust of the Zamboni!

Require the installation of one large indoor plant, shrub or tree for each time that a Zamboni cleans the ice during a 24 hour period.

Connect a flexible 300 yard hose to the exhaust of the Zamboni and run the other end out through the roof.

Or perhaps concentrate on other means to protect children from pollution.

I was at a professional hockey game where they were serving free beans and beer. By the third period I can guarantee that no one could smell the exhaust coming from the Zamboni.

Posted March 12, 2007 02:31 PM

Andy

Now come on you guy's!!! People have been sitting in arena's forever and they are NOT dying!

This whole clean air/dirty air thing is getting just plain stupid!  
Who is behind all this crap?

I am starting to get the feeling that there is a hidden agenda involved here. We are subjected to more of this crap everyday and it is getting out of hand! If it is the do-gooders and the tree huggers, they need to back off.

Hey I know....maybe it is the GREEN PARTY??

Posted March 12, 2007 12:51 PM

Bob

Oh give me a break. Most of us have been going to hockey games for years and are alive to tell the tale.

Too many people are too busy thinking of anything environmental that might, but probably never will, kill us. I am tired of it.

Remember the old saying? Living on earth causes cancer? Let's all get a grip and enjoy our lives!

Posted March 12, 2007 12:06 PM

allan

kamloops

Sure, blame the dirty air on the poor hardworking Zamboni.

It's a conspiracy and now apparently, CBC is part of it. But you can't hide the truth from us.

We can follow our own noses.

It's all those old hockey equipment bags, filled with moldy socks and other stuff, hundreds of thousands of them right across Canada, that have filled the old barns to the rafters with the lingering memories of games gone by.

Posted March 12, 2007 11:58 AM

TM

PE

What isn't a health hazard today.

Maybe they can fix all the arena health problems by spraying one of those chemicals advertise on tv where they spray even bedding and kidz clothing with it to get rid of bacteria and germs and freshen the air.

Maybe the people fighting to get smoking banned can start in on fighting to ban all the chemicals in our foods and drinks....which would be a much better start to fixing health.

Maybe we're all oversanitized. We're definitely over-chemicalized.

But don't worry....whatever health problem there is out there in this world, I'm sure they'll find a drug for it. They never want to CURE it....but they do like to give us drugs for it.

It's all about the money.

Posted March 12, 2007 11:52 AM

Carla

Holy cow!!! Is this ever an old story line!!! What ever happened to CURRENT events? Come on CBC, asleep at the switch? Looking for inspired staff? I'm looking for a career change! Call me!!!

Posted March 12, 2007 11:21 AM

Stan Welner

Brampton

This is nothing new! All levels of governments were well aware of this fact.

By the way, this was supposed to be a secret!?

Now that it has come to light, governments just might be forced to act. I only hope that they will improve the air quality as opposed to punish those who revealed this discrepancy!

Posted March 12, 2007 11:15 AM

Marc Kobayashi

I'm all for Hybrids, but as current Hybrids regain energy when the breaks are applied, I don't think a Hybrid Zamboni will regain much electrical power.

However, a Plugin Hybrid Electric Zamboni would definitely do the trick!

Posted March 12, 2007 11:13 AM

Dave

Vancouver

As we've learned from the anti-smoking crowd, no amount of fine particulate is safe. Will the government take steps immediately to ban Zambonis from all indoor facilities?

Posted March 12, 2007 11:11 AM

Greg Petteplace

Toronto

With no recognized standard - environment Canada is only beginning to study health effect, you are quite happy comparing levels between arenas.

The only evidence you appear to cite is anecdotal about Olympic ice rink athletes. The reporting is composed of "could pose", "think you will find" and "he believes".

As an investigative piece - it is more scare than science. You can do better than this.

Posted March 12, 2007 11:10 AM

c.zachar

winnipeg

What about other arenas, like indoor soccer. Many players complain about asthma like symptoms, can you investigate that as well?

Should we have health concerns about them as well?(Dust and odor is coming from the rubber pellets under the turf. Seven Oaks is the worst, but the new Highlander is also very bad. )

Posted March 12, 2007 11:08 AM

Gerald Anderson

You should check out the air in the Royal Winter Fair Horse Show arena when the tractors come out to smooth the dirt floor. One can hardly breathe during this activity.

Posted March 12, 2007 11:07 AM

Joe

Halifax

It is a shame that we don't have a test group of adults who grew up playing in arenas to test this theory. But wait... I think we just might have hundreds of thousands of them sitting around right now! How about we see some actual data linking this idea to health issues within this large and available demographic before we start raising the alarm.

These particles may or may not be a problem but I'm getting tired of hearing these "health warnings" every time I turn around when the actual needed testing and research just hasn't been done.

Get that data and we'll have a story (or not) but in the mean time it's only yet another speculative fear based article.

Posted March 12, 2007 11:05 AM

SE

Winnipeg

Two words. Hybrid Zamboni.

Posted March 12, 2007 10:20 AM

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