



Spartanburg Water System Ice House Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Spartanburg Water System (SWS) is launching an innovative new program that will place “ice houses” around our service area to bring fresh, on-demand ice and water to the community in a convenient, economical way. It’s also a green solution since the ice is produced locally and not trucked in from other parts of the country. Below are answers to some frequently asked questions about the program and how it will benefit the greater Spartanburg area.

Why is SWS getting into a private enterprise, especially one where the product is already readily available at grocery and convenience stores?

Ice is just water in another form and Spartanburg Water has been in the water business for more than 100 years. We are proud that our long-range planning, which has included additional reservoirs and other measures to ensure a good supply, gives us the tools to provide the best service for the citizens of Spartanburg County. And providing top-notch service means keeping an eye on the bottom line. We strive to maintain the most competitive rates in the county and our rates are some of the lowest in the region. But rising operational costs and aging infrastructure takes a financial toll on the entire system. To help offset these costs and maintain affordability of water services to our customers, SWS explored additional revenue opportunities.

Does the ice business really fit into SWS’s primary function of providing safe water?

Absolutely! It’s a product we’re already selling, just at a lower temperature. Our core business is providing the finest water and wastewater services to the citizens of Spartanburg County. The ice program will be no different. The revenue from the program will go towards infrastructure repair and replacement, which helps SWS maintain affordable rates. Most of the ice houses will also dispense water in bulk giving customers a convenient, economical source for portable water. Plus if there is ever a service disruption in one area, residents will still have access to SWS water.

How does the ice house work?

Each ice house is a 200 square foot modular unit with 4-inch insulated refrigerator panels. Inside components are made entirely of 100% food-grade stainless steel. It will be connected directly to an existing SWS water line. The unit produces ice on demand, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, making it a fresh, fast, convenient way to buy ice. Essentially when you’re ready for ice or water, it’s ready – similar to the convenience of a drive-up ATM. Ice is available either in bag or bulk form and it is chipped, not frozen into one mass. Bags are sold in 16-lb sizes, while the bulk is 20 lbs. Most of the units will also dispense water in bulk. The ice house also features a water purification system that gives people the option of bringing their own container for filling, such as a cooler. In case of a service disruption or lengthy power outage, Spartanburg residents will have an alternate source for getting ice and water. FEMA already uses these units in areas hit by natural disasters. In fact they were used to provide ice to Katrina evacuees at the Astrodome in Houston.

How much will the ice cost?

The price for a 16-lb bag or in 20-lb bulk form is \$1.50. The cost of a typical bag of ice in the Spartanburg area averages about \$3.00 for an 8-lb bag.

Are my rates going up to help pay for this?

No. SWS views this as an investment in the community’s future. The initial start-up capital will come from SWS, but we fully expect that the revenue from the ice program will make the program self-sustaining and will eventually offset or reduce cost increases in the future caused by rising operation and infrastructure replacement costs.

How are you selecting the locations for the ice machines?

Because we know the county, we can select the locations where the need for convenient ice and water is the greatest. Typically target locations include discount and grocery stores, apartment complexes, and recreational facilities. Initially three

ice houses will be set up in the county that will offer the best access and convenient locations in the event of a service disruption or power outage.

How do the ice houses benefit SWS's customers?

They have access to fresh ice and water at a great price; it's a particular value for those who regularly buy ice or even bottled water. Additionally, money generated by the ice houses will go back to SWS's system helping to offset costs and continue to allow Spartanburg Water to provide water at the most affordable rates in the area. It is also a green solution because the ice is produced onsite from local water sources and not stored for months or trucked in from out of state.

What's in it for me if I'm not an SWS customer?

The same great fresh products, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! Whether you are connected to our system at home or not, you can still enjoy the high quality water - in liquid or frozen form - SWS produces. And the cost is typically half the price of a retail bag of ice and much less than the cost of bottled water.

How can SWS assure the quality and safety of the ice?

The units have food grade stainless steel interiors and the water and ice are produced with no human contact. In fact, when you buy the ice or water, you'll be the first one to handle it. The ice machines meet strict standards set by the state's Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Plus the people regularly servicing the units will be licensed water plant operators employed by SWS. They are used to following rigorous protocols in producing water for Spartanburg and will bring this same level of attention to ice house maintenance.

How do you keep ice in the machines from running out?

The machines are monitored electronically and the system keeps Spartanburg Water aware of maintenance issues. Realistically, each ice house can produce 300 - 600 bags of ice a day.

For more information visit our website www.spartanburgwater.org or call Bobby Walden at 864-596-4923, extension 102.

