

Get The Real Facts on Synthetic Ice

Cost of Synthetic Ice: What should a community expect to pay?

We often get asked “what would a standard size NHL rink cost if we were to put in synthetic ice?” Great question. First of all the majority of North American rinks we come across are not regulation NHL size rinks. A regulation NHL size rink measures 200 feet x 85 feet. But for the purposes of this article we will consider the full NHL size. If your size is not to NHL spec then simply come up with a cost per square foot based on figures within this article.

There is a vast discrepancy of product material and connection choices to consider. Therefore I will provide a range of material grades and connection systems available, and price accordingly.

Understand Connection Systems

One very common connection system is the “dovetail” connection joint. It is very popular because its simplistic nature to install - virtually anyone can install it. The surface that this type of panel is installed on top of needs to be virtually perfect for the safest and best performance from this panel connection type. IcePro offers several types of dovetail panels for consideration.

The safest, most reliable connection system we have seen on the market since 1978 is the H-Tongue connection system in a 18mm thick commercial panel. This system locks the panels both vertically and horizontally such that it is virtually impossible for a panel joint to ever fail from normal skating use.

Panel Material

Next you need to consider panel material. There is a vast range of material and many suppliers believe their panel material to be the fastest and the most realistic. It makes it tough for the buyer to decide what is the best. Often panel suppliers quote manufacturer specs

indicating friction coefficients. The problem with that indicator is that they never quote these numbers as it relates to skating efficiency. For example UHMWPE has an excellent friction coefficient - until a skate blade travels over it. When measured using a skate blade the friction coefficient changes dramatically.

Panels that are made with materials that have a higher molecular weight tend to be sinter pressed and are of a much higher density and quality. They are also faster, and priced higher because both the raw material is more expensive and so is the manufacturing process. Extruded panels on the other hand tend to be a lower density panel and will not be the best panel over the long term for this type of major investment.

Consumers like to ask about the price per square foot – which of course doesn’t mean a lot unless the same material is being compared.

So - back to the original question about the cost of a full sized NHL rink. A low price range based on few features could be priced at between \$187,000 - \$305,000 for a decent performing product. For a high performance product you should expect to pay between \$360,000 and \$450,000. Additional features can include goal creases, face-off dots, and all the lines. Again marking systems vary and the best ones use solid, fully connected lines and markings that can never come loose.

These prices do not include boards or glass. Experienced installation teams know how to work with new or existing boards systems. Often companies can provide a turn key package.

For more information on synthetic ice pricing and options visit www.SmartRink.ca.

About the author

Tim Oldfield is owner of SmartRink. He has watched his daughter and son grow up playing hockey and develop into elite athletes who love the game. As company owner, Tim is committed to ensuring buyers and consumers of synthetic ice are educated and well informed on product choices.