TECHNOLOGY

# Manitowoc Ice Machine Cleaning Instructions

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## Why Proper Ice Machine Maintenance Matters

Whether you run a bustling restaurant, a hotel kitchen, or a small café, your Manitowoc ice machine works hard every single day. It produces hundreds of pounds of ice, often in challenging environments with hard water, airborne grease, and fluctuating temperatures. Over time, mineral deposits, mold, slime, and bacteria build up inside the system. When this happens, your ice quality drops, production slows down, and your machine works harder than it should.

Following a regular schedule of **Manitowoc ice machine cleaning instructions**is not just about keeping your equipment looking nice. It is about protecting your investment, ensuring food safety, and maintaining the fresh taste and clarity of the ice your customers rely on. A clean machine uses less energy, lasts longer, and keeps health inspectors happy. In this guide, we will walk you through every step you need to know, from gathering the right supplies to running a full cleaning cycle the correct way.

## How Often Should You Clean Your Manitowoc Ice Machine?

Frequency depends on your water quality and usage volume. However, a good rule of thumb is to perform a complete cleaning cycle every six months. Many commercial kitchens and bars find that a quarterly schedule works better, especially if they have hard water or heavy ice demand. You should also clean the machine immediately if you notice:

- Cloudy or odorous ice
- Slime or scale buildup inside the bin
- Reduced ice production
- Longer freeze cycles than normal
- Visible mold or algae in the ice chute or curtain

Beyond full cleaning cycles, you should also wipe down exterior surfaces, clean the air filter, and check the water inlet screen on a weekly or monthly basis. These small steps extend the time between deep cleans and keep your machine running efficiently.

## Essential Tools and Supplies

Before you begin, gather everything you need. Having the right supplies on hand makes the process smooth and prevents interruptions. Here is what you will need for proper **Manitowoc ice machine cleaning instructions**:

- Manitowoc Ice Machine Cleaner (specifically formulated for these systems)
- Manitowoc Sanitizer (look for a food-grade, no-rinse formula or follow your model’s recommendations)
- Clean, soft cloths or sponges
- A small bucket or container for mixed cleaning solution
- A spray bottle for sanitizer
- Soft nylon brush (avoid metal brushes that can scratch surfaces)
- Protective gloves and safety glasses
- Owner’s manual for your specific model (always good to have nearby)

Using the correct cleaner designed for Manitowoc machines is critical. Household vinegar or bleach can damage internal components, void your warranty, and leave unpleasant residues. Stick to the recommended products for best results.

## Step-by-Step Manitowoc Ice Machine Cleaning Instructions

### Step 1: Turn Off and Empty the Machine

Start by shutting off the ice machine at the main power switch. If your model has a water supply valve, turn that off as well. Remove all ice from the storage bin. You can discard it or transfer it to another freezer if you need it for service. Leaving ice in the bin during cleaning means some pieces may absorb cleaning solution or contaminants, so it is best to start with an empty bin.

Allow the machine to sit for a few minutes so any remaining frost on the evaporator can thaw. This makes the cleaning solution more effective when it reaches the internal surfaces.

### Step 2: Remove and Clean the Ice Curtain and Bin

Open the door or curtain covering the ice storage area. Carefully remove the ice curtain (the flexible plastic flap that hangs inside). Wash it by hand with warm soapy water, rinse thoroughly, and set it aside to dry. Next, use a clean cloth and a mild detergent to wipe down the entire interior of the ice bin, including the walls, floor, and door gaskets. Rinse with clean water and dry with a fresh cloth.

Do not forget to inspect the drain line in the bin. If you see any debris or slime, clean it out gently with a brush or cloth. A clean bin ensures that the ice that falls after the cleaning cycle stays fresh.

### Step 3: Prepare the Cleaning Solution

Follow the instructions on your Manitowoc Ice Machine Cleaner bottle. Typically, you will mix a specific amount of cleaner with warm water (not hot) in a bucket. The exact ratio depends on your model and the concentration of the cleaner. If your machine has a built-in cleaning function, check the manual for the exact amount of cleaner to pour directly into the water trough or reservoir.

Wear gloves and safety glasses when handling the cleaning solution. Even though it is food-safe when used correctly, it is still a chemical that can irritate skin and eyes.

### Step 4: Run the Cleaning Cycle

With the cleaning solution prepared, pour it into the water trough or reservoir as directed by your manual. Most Manitowoc machines have a dedicated cleaning cycle that you can activate by pressing a button or flipping a switch. If your model does not have an automatic cleaning cycle, you may need to let the machine run a normal ice-making cycle with the cleaning solution in the water system.

The cleaning solution will circulate through the water system, the evaporator plates, and all internal lines. This process breaks down mineral scale, algae, and biofilm that have built up over time. Allow the machine to run for the full duration specified in the manual (usually 20 to 45 minutes). You may hear the machine go through several stages during this time.

### Step 5: Rinse Thoroughly

Once the cleaning cycle is complete, you must rinse the entire system to remove all traces of the cleaning solution. Start by emptying the water trough or reservoir. Then refill it with fresh, potable water. Run the machine through at least two full rinse cycles. If your machine has a dedicated rinse setting, use that. Otherwise, let it run a normal ice-

making cycle with clean water, then discard the first batch of ice that is produced.

Do not skip rinse cycles. Residual cleaning solution can affect ice taste and may cause off-flavors or odors. When the rinse water runs clear and no bubbles or foam remain, you are ready to move on.

### Step 6: Sanitize the System

After rinsing, it is time to sanitize. Mix your Manitowoc-approved sanitizer according to the label instructions. Some sanitizers require a specific contact time to be effective. Pour the sanitizer solution into the water trough or reservoir, or apply it with a spray bottle to internal surfaces depending on your model.

Allow the sanitizer to circulate or sit for the recommended contact time (usually 5 to 10 minutes). This step kills bacteria and prevents mold growth. After the contact time is completed, drain the sanitizer solution and rinse the system again with fresh water. If you use a no-rinse sanitizer, follow the instructions carefully—some types do not require a final rinse.

### Step 7: Reassemble and Restart

Once the sanitizing and rinsing are finished, wipe down the interior of the bin one last time with a clean cloth. Replace the ice curtain that you cleaned earlier. Turn the water supply back on and restore power to the machine. Make sure the machine is set to its normal operating mode.

Allow the machine to produce a full batch of ice. Discard this first batch to ensure that any remaining traces of cleaning or sanitizing solutions are completely flushed out. After that, your Manitowoc ice machine is ready for service, producing clean, clear, great-tasting ice.

## Proactive Maintenance Between Deep Cleans

Full cleaning cycles are essential, but you can make them less frequent by staying on top of small daily and weekly tasks. Here are some habits that help extend the cleanliness of your machine:

- Check the air filter weekly. A dirty filter reduces airflow, making the compressor work harder and reducing efficiency. Clean or replace it as needed.
- Inspect the water inlet screen. Many models have a small screen that traps sediment. If it becomes clogged, water flow decreases and ice production slows down.
- Wipe down the condenser coils every month. Dust and grease buildup on coils can cause overheating and shorten the life of your machine.
- Use a food-grade ice scoop. Avoid touching ice with bare hands or using glassware to scoop. This prevents introducing bacteria into the bin.
- Keep the area around the machine clean. Dust, grease, and food debris can be pulled into the ventilation system, affecting performance.

By combining these simple tasks with a regular deep-cleaning schedule, your Manitowoc ice machine will perform at its best for years to come.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

Even experienced operators sometimes make errors when cleaning their ice machines. Here are the most common pitfalls and how to avoid them:

- Skipping the rinse step. Some people think a quick rinse is enough after cleaning. In reality, you need at least two full rinse cycles to remove all traces of cleaner.

- Using household bleach. Bleach is too harsh for the internal components of a Manitowoc machine and can cause corrosion. It can also leave a chemical taste that is hard to remove.
- Forgetting to clean the bin liner. The bin itself can harbor bacteria and slime even if the water system is clean. Always wipe it down during every cleaning cycle.
- Ignoring the air filter. A clogged filter reduces airflow and can cause the machine to run hotter, leading to scale buildup and reduced efficiency.
- Not discarding the first batch of ice after cleaning. That first batch may contain residual cleaning solution or loose debris. Always throw it away.
- Forgetting to check the owner’s manual. Models vary slightly in how you activate the cleaning cycle or where to pour the solution. The manual is your best friend.

Avoiding these mistakes will make your cleaning sessions more effective and help your machine stay in peak condition.

## How to Know If Your Machine Needs Professional Servicing

While regular cleaning solves many common issues, some problems require a trained technician. If you notice any of the following after a thorough cleaning, it is time to call for professional help:

- The machine still produces cloudy or smelly ice
- Ice production remains low even after cleaning
- The machine makes unusual noises (grinding, squealing, or knocking)
- Water leaks from the machine that are not related to the cleaning process
- The machine repeatedly triggers error codes or fails to cycle

Professional technicians have tools to test water quality, inspect internal components, and diagnose deeper issues. Sometimes a mineral scale buildup inside the water lines is too stubborn for a standard cleaning cycle, and a technician can perform a more intensive descale. Other times, there may be a mechanical or electrical problem that requires repair or replacement parts.

Remember that regular maintenance reduces the likelihood of needing emergency repairs, so following these **Manitowoc ice machine cleaning instructions**


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