

## State food safety depts directed to start dry ice awareness campaign

Friday, 08 November, 2019

Ashwani Maindola, New Delhi

The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has asked the state food safety departments to start a campaign for awareness about handling dry ice or solid carbon dioxide.

The country's apex food regulator issued a notice in this regard, stating that state food safety commissioners had been directed to initiate a systematic campaign for generating awareness amongst all food business operators (FBOs) and citizens on the safe and proper handling of dry ice as cooling agent for food products.

FSSAI's notice stated, "Dry ice, the solid form of carbon dioxide, is commonly used as a cooling agent for food products like ice cream, frozen desserts, etc., and used frequently for food items that are needed to be cold or frozen without the use of mechanical cooling."

"It is, therefore, advised that while using dry ice as cooling agent for food products it shall never be kept or stored or transported in a closed environment, and precaution shall always be taken to ensure that the area in use is properly ventilated to avoid any health risk," it added.

Ashwin Bhadri, chief executive officer, Equinox Labs, said, "Dry ice, used as a cooling agent, is an essential and cost-productive measure offering maximised efficiency."

"It is significant in providing non-destructive, sustainable cleaning solution for FBOs without producing secondary waste. The unique characteristics of dry ice make it a suitable cooling media for e-commerce, last-mile delivery, pharmaceuticals and biological samples," he added.

"The sublimation of dry ice into gas ensures temperature maintenance in the cold chain without harming the cooling media," said Bhadri, adding that precautions should be taken by the handlers while handling dry ice.

He told that due to its extremely cold nature, it is essential for handlers to use tongs or gloves to avoid getting severe ice burns. FBOs should make sure that dry ice is not sealed in a container as it can rupture and can cause hearing injury or internal frostbite. Dry ice is solid CO<sub>2</sub> which turns to gas in open air, making it difficult to breathe and in extreme cases loss of consciousness. It is vital for FBOs to expose it to a well-ventilated environment.