



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 8, 2011

Michigan Counties to Lick Terrorism With Snow Cones

According to the [Greenville Daily News](#), the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC), “a federal- and state-designated agency responsible for managing and administrating the homeland security program in Montcalm County and 12 other counties[,] ... recently purchased and transferred homeland security equipment to these counties — including 13 snow cone machines at a total cost of \$11,700.” ([WOOD-TV](#) of Grand Rapids puts the price tag at a mere \$6,200.) WMSRDC got the money for the machines and other equipment via a grant from the Michigan Homeland Security Program.



What, pray tell, does a snow-cone machine have to do with homeland security? Says the *Daily News*: “The Michigan Homeland Security Grant Program’s Allowable Cost Justification document, dated May 9, 2011, says the snow cone machines can make ice to prevent heat-related illnesses during emergencies, treat injuries and provide snow cones as an outreach at promotional events.”

WMSRDC executive director Sandeep Dey echoed this justification, telling the *Daily News* that the machine “is used to attract people so they can be educated and prepared for homeland security.” “More importantly,” he added, “they (homeland security officials) felt in a medical emergency the machine was capable of making ice packs which could be used for medical purposes.”

In an interview with WOOD-TV, Grand Rapids Deputy Fire Chief Gary Szotko likewise touted his county’s snow-cone machine as a means of producing “ice packs for responders,” helping “volunteers to stay hydrated in a different way than bottled water,” and providing “an attraction at public functions where they are trying to recruit volunteers.”

Oddly, for a piece of equipment so critical to homeland security, only one county out of the 13 thought to request a snow-cone machine. Fortunately for the other 12, WMSRDC was so generous with other people’s money that it bought one for each of them. The commission did, however, turn down a request for a popcorn machine from one county, whose mistake, it seems, was not to ask for anything else. Dey “said the snow cone machine request would not have been granted by itself, but was approved because it came with other homeland security equipment,” the *Daily News* reports. If only the requesting county had thought to add a bulletproof vest to its request and to justify the popcorn machine on the basis that it could provide sustenance to emergency personnel, all 13 counties would be able to offer both snow cones *and* snacks at next summer’s festivals.

Clearly the public-relations function of the snow-cone machines is the primary reason for their purchase, with the business about ice packs and hydration dreamed up to put a homeland-security veneer on such a blatant misuse of taxpayer dollars. Grand Rapids blogger [D.E. Paine](#), dismissing the “heat-related” emergency excuse given that Michigan is not a particularly hot state even in July, writes:

Government outreach seems plausible. You know, so that you don’t get all bent out of shape about



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the DHS placing Catholic Worker groups and anti-war activists on terror watch lists. Is your daughter a critic of the Federal Government and being monitored? “Chill out, citizen, and have a snow cone.”

Retracting his tongue from his cheek slightly, Paine adds:

One clue as to the “outreach” and “educating” that could be taking place in your county or township might be found at some Wal Mart stores, where DHS had [propaganda videos](#) playing at checkouts last December.

Perhaps Homeland Security will host screenings of Janet Napolitano’s videos, and hand around snow cones. (But no popcorn, because that request was denied.) The video could be followed by a discussion about “if you see something, say something.”

But if you see your local fire department handing out treats from its brand new “homeland security” snow-cone machine, you might want to think twice before saying something — or you, too, just might end up on ice.



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