

# Mexicans get holiday cheer, pain on ice

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MEXICO CITY --

Thousands of Mexicans are skating, wobbling and often falling on a giant ice rink set up by the tropical capital's government to bring some holiday cheer to this massive, chaotic metropolis.

The rink in Mexico City's main square measures 34,445 square feet - twice the size of a professional hockey rink and nearly five times as big as the one at New York's Rockefeller Center.

Mayor Marcelo Ebrard inaugurated it Saturday night and by Monday, more than 5,000 skaters glided across its surface, sometimes none too gracefully. At least 30 people received medical attention for bumps, bruises and one broken nose.

"Don't hold on to the rail, keep moving and keep your feet in a V shape. Don't lean forward," yelled a city worker, as a woman struggled to stay on her feet.

Dozens of other city employees, some wearing helmets, stood on the rink, barking out instructions and helping scoop up fallen skaters. A disc jockey spun pop and dance music and warned people not to talk on their cell phones while skating.

"Your feet want to go to the sides, and that makes it hard to stay standing," said 10-year-old Eric Santoyo, a first-time ice skater.

Santoyo swayed from side to side and fell twice but still wanted to get back on the ice.

"I'm going to come back and keep practicing until I don't fall," Santoyo said.

The rink is free and the city provides skates to those who don't have them - which is most in an area where winter temperatures are often near 70. It's part of Ebrard's campaign to make the city famed for thick smog and unbearable traffic jams more "fun."

The center-left mayor has pledged to transform the metropolitan area of 21 million people into a model of urban renewal.

In the summer, the city trucked in sand to build "urban beaches" at seven public pools. It has also closed down main avenues on Sundays for cyclists and inline skaters.

The rink will remain open until Jan. 7.