



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUN 17 2015
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Edward L. Long Jr.
County Executive
SUBJECT: Synthetic Turf Fields

In 2012, in response to community concerns about the safety of the use of crumb rubber as infill for synthetic turf in athletic fields, the Fairfax County Park Authority, in consultation with the Health Department, Risk Management Division and Fairfax County Public Schools prepared a fact sheet on the use of crumb rubber synthetic turf based on a literature review of scientific research conducted by numerous state and national organizations who have studied the issue. The general conclusion for all the studies is that health effects are unlikely from exposure to the levels of chemicals found in synthetic turf with crumb rubber infill and that these fields do not pose a serious public health concern. The fact sheet was made available to the public through the Park Authority website and is available at:

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/syntheticurf.htm>

Last fall, in response to renewed concerns by community members as a result of an NBC report of cancers in soccer players, the Health Department conducted another extensive review of the scientific literature related to the potential health effects from the use of these fields. No new findings showing a link between crumb rubber and any health risk were identified, and available information concluded that the use of synthetic turf in athletic fields remains safe.

Recently, new concerns have been raised by some community members who are requesting a ban on crumb rubber on all county fields and playgrounds; the use of only plant-derived alternatives (cork, coconut, risk husk) as infill; the remediation of all existing fields within two years; and consideration of new grass technologies or keeping some fields as natural grass.

The county's decision to allow use of crumb rubber as infill for synthetic turf fields is based on extensive review of scientific papers conducted by state and national organizations over the last decade. However, as a result of the recent concerns, the county has requested (and is receiving) assistance from state and federal public health partners to perform further review of recent and ongoing scientific investigations and the methodologies used to determine health and safety risks of using crumb rubber infill. To further our understanding about exposures to users of these fields, the county has requested additional studies be made by appropriate federal agencies and include county involvement, if possible. In addition, the county, with assistance from the Virginia Department of Health, will be performing a review of cancer rates in the county over the last decade to establish trends and identify any associations that may exist between the use of existing turf fields and cancer rates.

While this extensive effort continues, it is important to note that there is no established scientific evidence of the occurrence of a greater than expected number of cancers in children associated with crumb rubber. As such, the county will continue to use crumb rubber infill for turf fields until findings of these review efforts or peer-reviewed published scientific data support the need to change the infill product.

cc: Patricia D. Harrison, Deputy County Executive
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