




County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 03 2016

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Edward  Long Jr.
County Executive

SUBJECT: Update of County Actions to Date Regarding Synthetic Turf Fields

As you are well aware, there have been growing community concerns about the use of crumb rubber as infill for turf fields. The county takes these concerns very seriously and has taken a number of actions to better understand any potential health risks from exposure to crumb rubber to help inform county policy and decision-making.

I would like to provide you with an update on actions taken since my last memo of June 17, 2015, and the rationale for the county's position on continuing to use crumb rubber as synthetic turf infill.

Actions taken:

- The county did an extensive review of existing peer-reviewed scientific papers in 2012 and again in 2015 in response to renewed community concerns. The Virginia Department of Health was engaged to assess the appropriateness and rigor of methodologies used in synthetic turf field-related research reports and found them to be sound.
- In response to community concerns about the limitations of existing studies, the county contacted state and federal public health agencies about engaging in more comprehensive studies to better characterize the compounds found in crumb rubber and the exposures of individuals who use fields with crumb rubber infill. As a result, the county is under consideration as a potential study site for the newly-announced federal research study.
- The county sought the assistance of the Virginia Department of Health to perform a review of cancer rates in Northern Virginia from 2002-2012 to establish trends and compare rates before and after the installation of crumb rubber playing fields in 2007. Although the Virginia Cancer Registry analysis did not specifically include exposure to crumb rubber as an independent variable, the data did not show an increase in childhood cancers in Northern Virginia since the installation of synthetic turf fields with crumb rubber infill.
- The county considered the merits of reconvening the Synthetic Turf Task Force, a group chartered in 2012 to provide recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, School Board, Park Authority, and Athletic Council regarding the development, maintenance,

and replacement of turf fields in Fairfax County. The task force completed its work in July 2013 and, while it is recognized for its quality work, the decision was made to focus on ongoing efforts to leverage state and federal resources to take advantage of their capability and capacity to comprehensively address knowledge gaps and evaluate the new concerns about health risks. At this time the county does not believe that reconvening the task force will be helpful.

Based on existing science and the information acquired through the action steps listed above, the county has determined that there is no need to change the infill product used in synthetic turf fields.

The county's position is based on the following:

- To date, the concerns about increased risk of negative health effects due to the chemicals in crumb rubber turf fields have not been substantiated in the scientific literature.
- No study exists that has shown an elevated health risk from playing on fields with crumb rubber. The general conclusion for all the studies reviewed 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.
- There has been no evidence of an occurrence of a greater than expected number of cancers in children associated with crumb rubber.

As the county continues to proactively engage state and federal partners in ongoing research efforts, as well as monitor all available science and guidance on crumb rubber, it will reassess its position as new information becomes available.

Attachment: June 17, 2015, Memo to the Board Regarding Synthetic Turf Fields

cc: Pat Hynes, Chairman, Fairfax County School Board
Dr. Karen Garza, Superintendent, Fairfax County Public Schools
Patricia D. Harrison, Deputy County Executive
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Director, Health Department
Tony Castrilli, Director, Office of Public Affairs
Kirk W. Kincannon, Director, Fairfax County Park Authority
Christopher A. Leonard, Director, Department of Neighborhood and Community Services



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.

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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
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
Gloria Addo-Ayensu, M.D., Health Department
Christopher A. Leonard, Director, Neighborhood and Community Services
Kirk Kincannon, Director, Fairfax County Park Authority