



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 2, 2017
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Edward L. Long Jr.
County Executive
SUBJECT: Update on Synthetic Turf Fields

On January 19, 2017, Washington State Department of Health released the results of a study titled ***Investigation of Reported Cancer among Soccer Players in Washington State***, which was conducted in response to concerns about the amount of cancer among soccer players in Washington State. As the Board may recall, the most recent national attention surrounding the crumb rubber turf field infill issue centered around concerns raised by a University of Washington assistant soccer coach. The investigation was conducted by the Washington State Department of Health and the University of Washington School of Public Health. The researchers found less cancer among the soccer players than expected, based on rates of cancer among Washington residents of the same ages and conclude that “this finding does not suggest that soccer players, select and premier soccer players, or goalkeepers in Washington are at increased risk for cancer compared to the general population.”

In my May 3, 2016 memo, in which I outline the actions the county has taken in response to community concerns about the use of crumb rubber as infill for turf fields and our rationale for its continued use, I indicated that the Virginia Department of Health had reviewed the Virginia Cancer Registry cancer rates in Northern Virginia from 2002-2012. The purpose of the review was to establish trends and compare rates before and after the installation of crumb rubber playing fields in 2007. Although the analysis did not specifically include exposure to crumb rubber as an independent variable, it is important to note that the data did not show an increase in childhood cancers in Northern Virginia.

The county continues to proactively engage state and federal partners in ongoing research efforts. As a result, two Fairfax County fields are among the 40 synthetic turf fields (both indoor and outdoor) that the EPA and CDC/ATSDR have collected tire crumb rubber samples from, as part of their chemical characterization study to help them better understand the potential for exposure. Laboratory analyses of the samples are in progress and it is anticipated that results from the federal study will be available later this year.

Currently available research on artificial turf has not shown an elevated health risk from playing on fields with crumb rubber. As such, the county will continue its standard practice of using

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crumb rubber as a synthetic turf infill until new scientific evidence or guidance about the public health risk of crumb rubber emerges.

cc: Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
Patricia D. Harrison, Deputy County Executive
Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Director, Department of Health
Tony Castrilli, Director, Office of Public Affairs
Kirk Kincannon, Director, Park Authority
Christopher A. Leonard, Director, Department of Neighborhood and Community Services
Dr. Steven Lockard, Interim Superintendent, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)
Jeff Platenberg, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Transportation Services, FCPS