

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



Online survey* conducted by the CPRS Development and Operations Section

October 19 - 30, 2009

Email was sent out to all CPRS members in the following Sections:

Administrators
Recreation Supervisors
Development and Operations

Questions regarding this survey should be directed to:

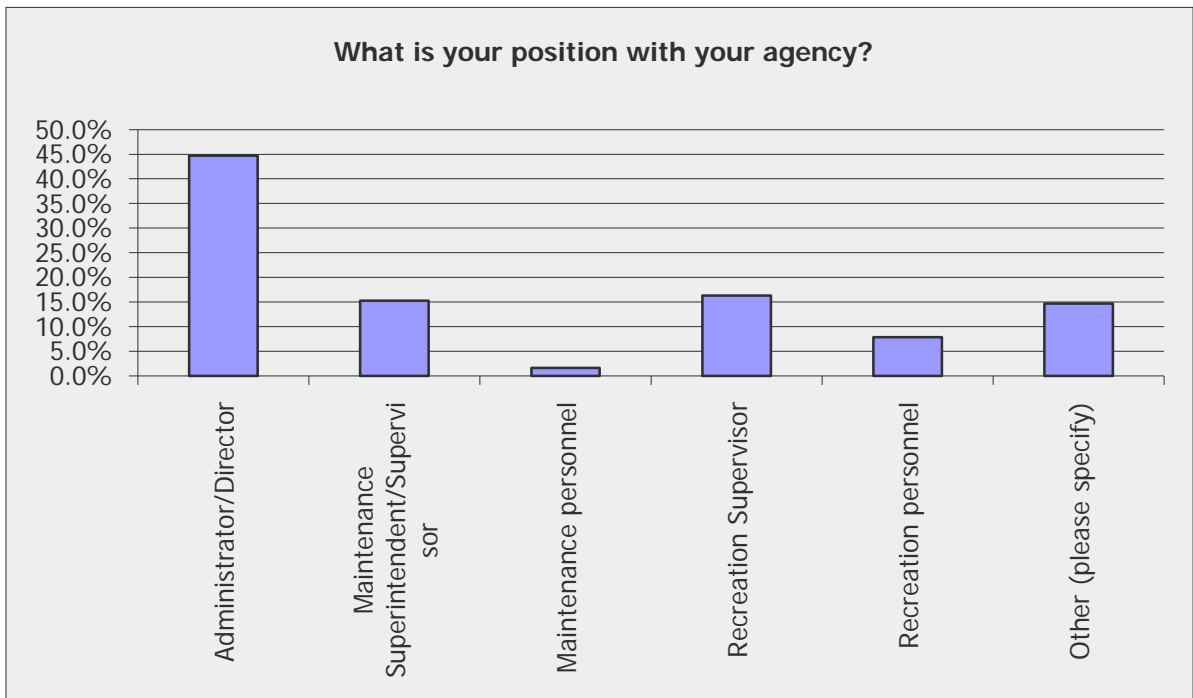
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**Survey was conducted using Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com)*

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



What is your position with your agency?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Administrator/Director	44.7%	85
Maintenance Superintendent/Supervisor	15.3%	29
Maintenance personnel	1.6%	3
Recreation Supervisor	16.3%	31
Recreation personnel	7.9%	15
Other (please specify)	14.7%	28
Please Specify		41
<i>answered question</i>		190
<i>skipped question</i>		1



- Other**
- Administrative Analyst/project manager

 - Recreation Superintendent

 - Risk Management

 - Community Services Manager

 - Park Planner

 - Park Planner

 - Recreation Manager

 - Community Service Manager

 - Design consultant

 - Recreation Specialist

 - Public Works Manager

 - Senior Administrative Analyst

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



What is your position with your agency?

Park Planner

Sr. Park Planner -- Advance Planning

Bureau manager

Sr. Recreation Supervisor and Sport field liaison

Recreation Superintendent

Admin Analyst

Parks and Recreation Director

Park Planner II

Facilities Coordinator

Park Superintendent

Director of Public Services

Program Manager

Landscape Architect Parks Manager

Recreation Superintendent

Recreation Coordinator

Assistant Director

Senior Park Planner

Recreation Superintendent

Recreation Coordinator

recreation specialist

Recreation Coordinator

Recreation Manager

Sr. Engineering Technician, Technical Services

High School Football Coach (my student teacher who is a JV coach filled this out)

park planner

Asst. Director, Operations

Inspector for field services, Parks

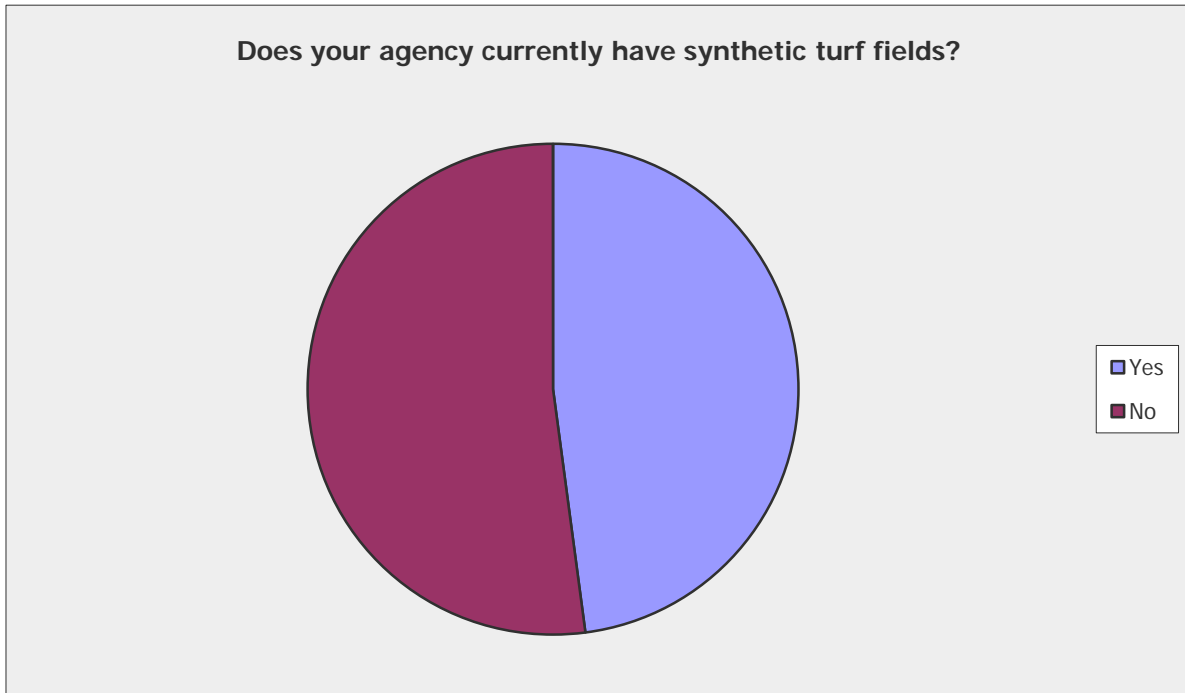
I retired in June 09. However I'm working for a new Recreation department part time.

Maintenance worker

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



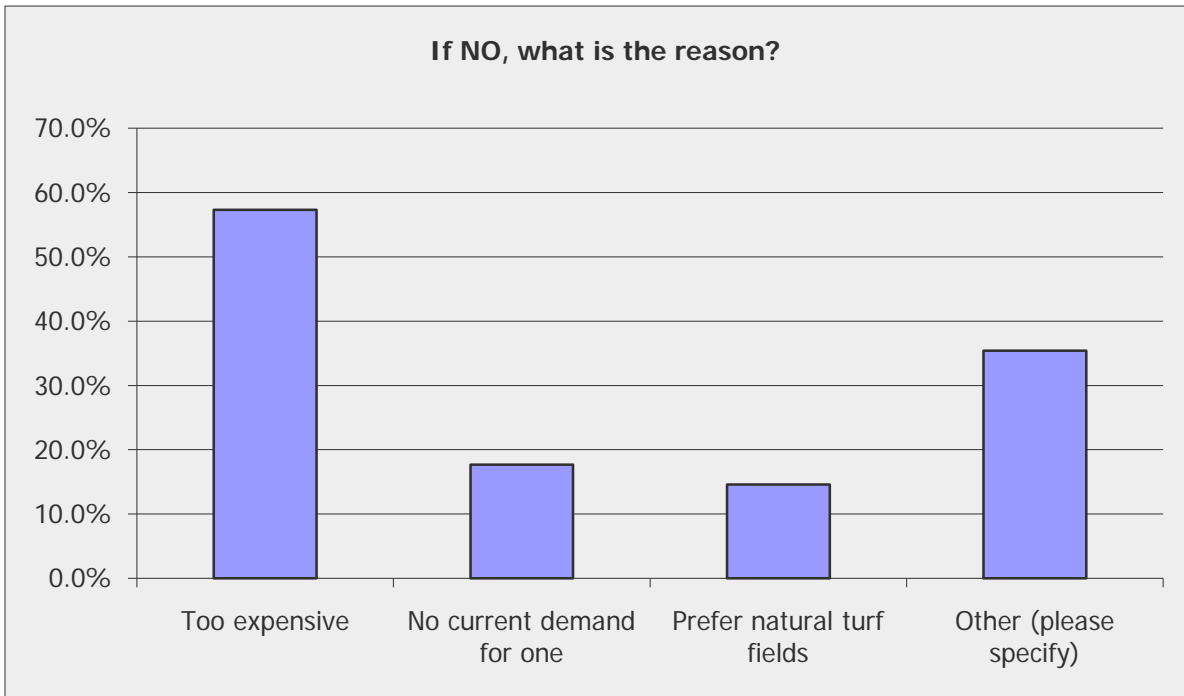
Does your agency currently have synthetic turf fields?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	47.9%	91
No	52.1%	99
<i>answered question</i>		190
<i>skipped question</i>		1



Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



If NO, what is the reason?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Too expensive	57.3%	55
No current demand for one	17.7%	17
Prefer natural turf fields	14.6%	14
Other (please specify)	35.4%	34
Please Specify		42
<i>answered question</i>		96
<i>skipped question</i>		95



Other

in process with WW funding

No funds available for any capital projects due to budget constraints

Have not had a project recently addressing athletic fields

We plan on installing one next year.

Currently constructing four synthetic fields - anticipated completion date is Spring 2010.

Currently installing 4 fields at Bartholomew Sports Park - Vendor is Field Turf

Our School District has several, some of which we've made a contribution to. They meet com. needs.

Lawndale wants real lawns in Lawndale

apprehension and lack of knowledge about synthetic turf fields

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



If NO, what is the reason?

Current fiscal atmosphere won't allow it - but we have done a study of our fields and are ready to go once the current economic crisis has passed

About to have two installed in development

We are currently in the pre construction phase for a synthetic bowling green.

we do not have synthetic turf fields, but we have installed synthetic turf in high traffic or sloped areas where it is working well.

Too expensive for initial outlay, and not enough data to show cost benefit long-term

Heat and restricted use - need durable surface for special events

We currently have a 16 field soccer complex in design. 4 of the adult fields are proposed to have synthetic surfacing.

very costly to protect from vandals

Concerned with future replacement costs of synthetic

We are in the process of transforming two of our fields into synthetic Turf

No sports fields

Waiting for an opportunity to develop funding for the field

opposition from the neighborhood where we want to have it installed.

Planning them for a redesigned facility

No money to install.

Plans for new facility held up; too expensive to install; heat concerns

We are concerned about the high desert temperatures from April through October.

We're putting 2 in.

development of new fields or upgrades of current field have not come up in the budget/reserves

We are in the planning stages of installing a dual purpose (football/soccer/baseball) synthetic field.

We used to have it but we recently removed it. Unless your site can be closed to the public or you can afford staff monitoring, the synthetic is too hard to maintain

haven't had the money to install yet, planning to install 1 field in 2010

too hot for playing, and would still need water use to cool down and clean

Currently researching the feasibility at our soccer park

Unknown long-term costs (replacement & disposal) as well as increased security costs.

The heat it generates, creates security issues to protect the fields, problems with the infill, no gum, no drinks needs to be monitored

No funds available after product has worn out.

The summer air temperatures reach 115F, and the turf would be much hotter.

Will have some soon!

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



If NO, what is the reason?

recent fields built with agreement to use reclaimed water.

we looking into redeveloping one park with synthetic turf depends on cost and what labor it takes to keep it in shape

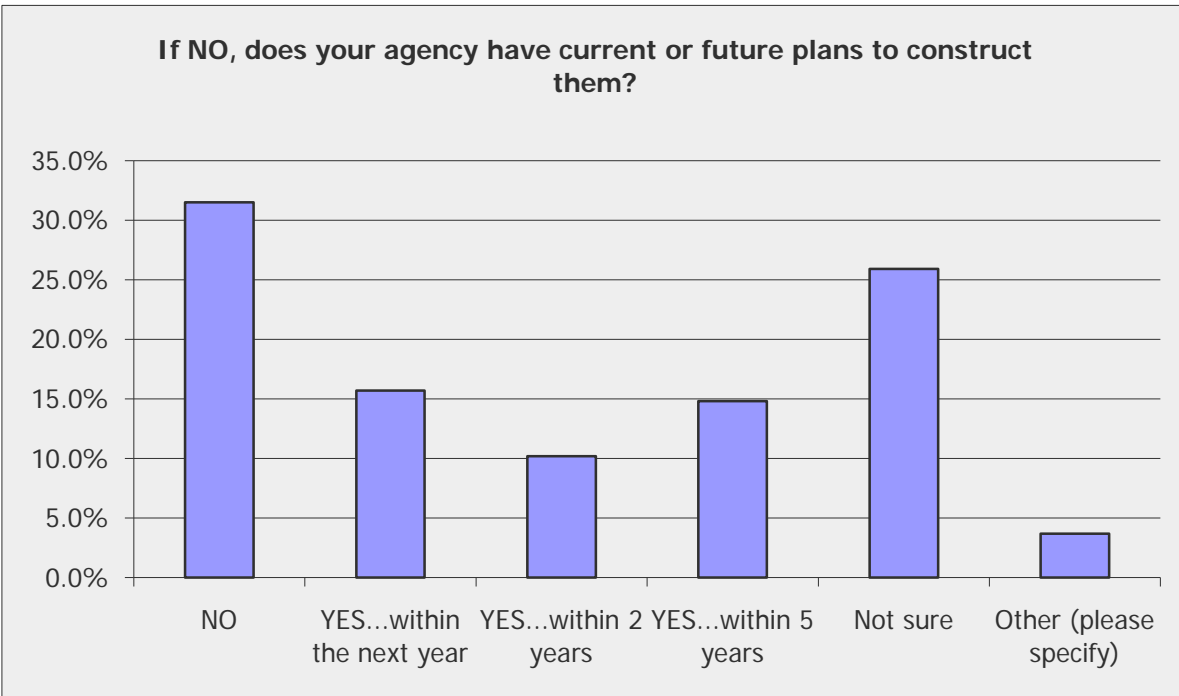
We had three soccer fields, used them for 10 years, they eventually wore out, no money was set aside to replace.

community resistance

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



If NO, does your agency have current or future plans to construct them?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
NO	31.5%	34
YES...within the next year	15.7%	17
YES...within 2 years	10.2%	11
YES...within 5 years	14.8%	16
Not sure	25.9%	28
Other (please specify)	3.7%	4
Please Specify		17
<i>answered question</i>		108
<i>skipped question</i>		83



Other

We are considering building one if the funding is available.

If funding becomes available, yes. If no funding is available, probably not

Opening in April of 2010

The Redevelopment Agency has funding for a synthetic turf project at one of our Parks.

CMX (out of Arizona) just concluded a field priority study for us. Very useful and well done! We are ready to put one in as soon as the budget will allow it.

The life cycle cost analysis render it not a cost effective method. Our analysis did not quantify the benefit associated with being able to play shortly after the rain

Might consider w/next renovation

The option has been considered. All comes down to, how to pay for it?

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



If NO, does your agency have current or future plans to construct them?

Depends upon availability of funding.

need to weigh costs vs. water costs/availability at time of development

no funding source to build one

2 field conversions from natural to synthetic will begin construction in November 2009

Planning two fields early spring and a third in a future park development.

we had plans to do so but the cost was too high so it has been delayed indefinitely

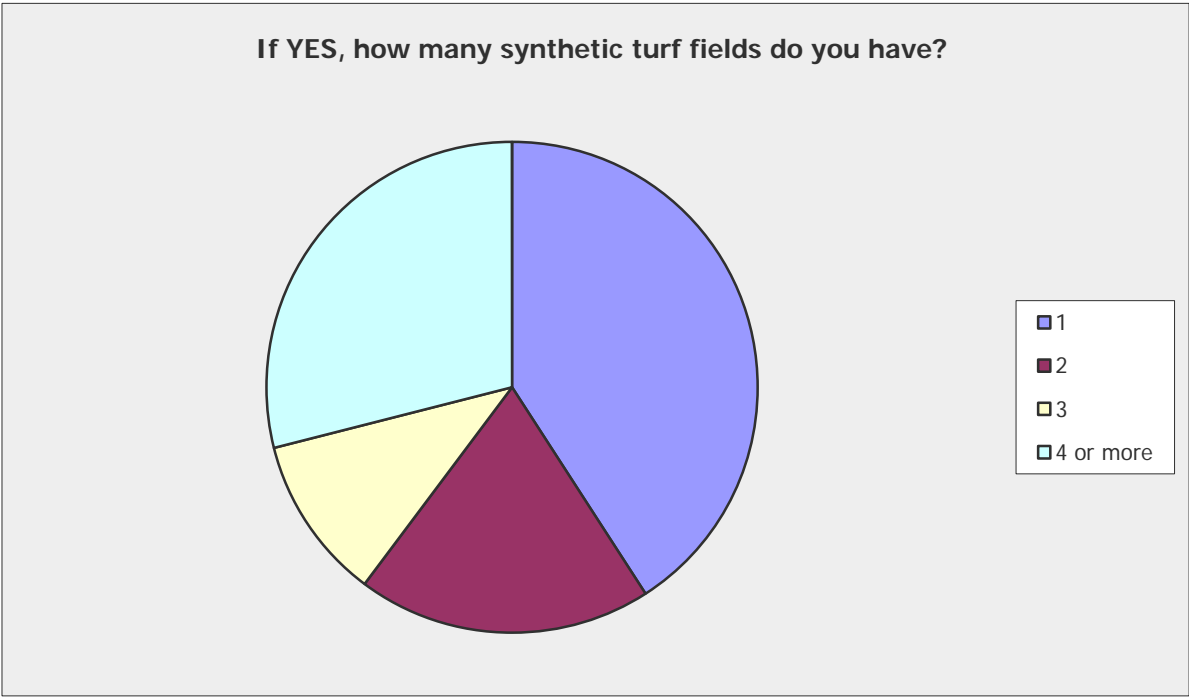
All the High Schools put in synthetic fields

We need more information on synthetic turf to many rumors on problems that come with synthetic turf.

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



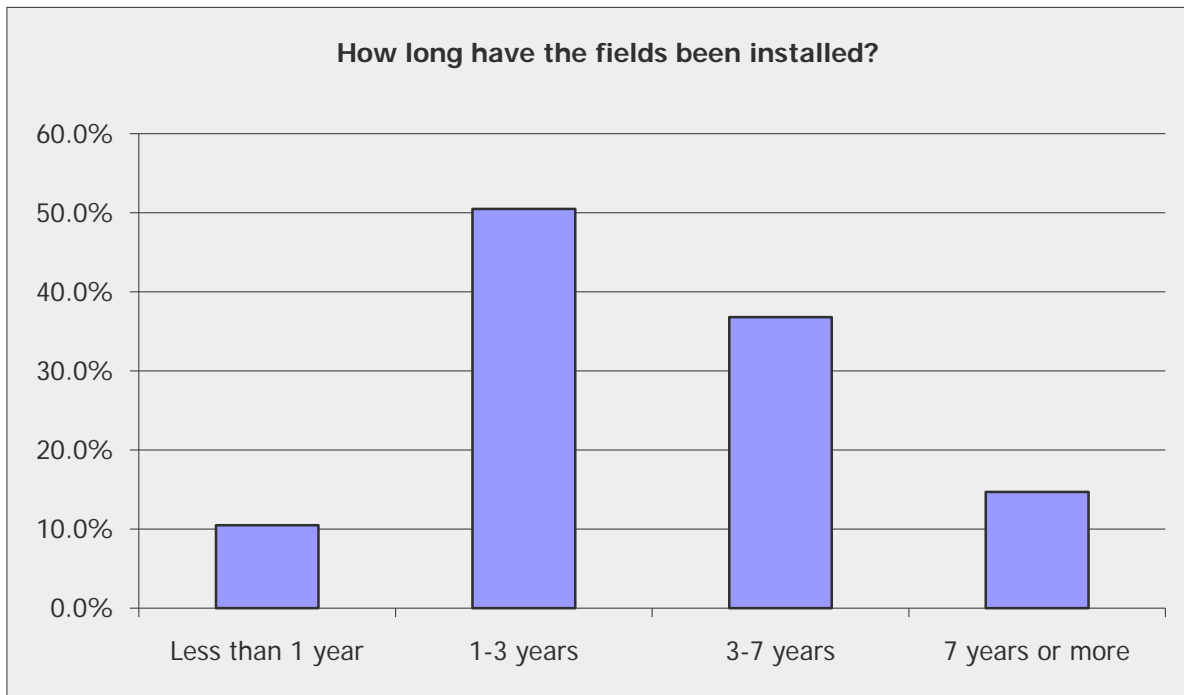
If YES, how many synthetic turf fields do you have?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	40.9%	38
2	19.4%	18
3	10.8%	10
4 or more	29.0%	27
<i>answered question</i>		93
<i>skipped question</i>		98



Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



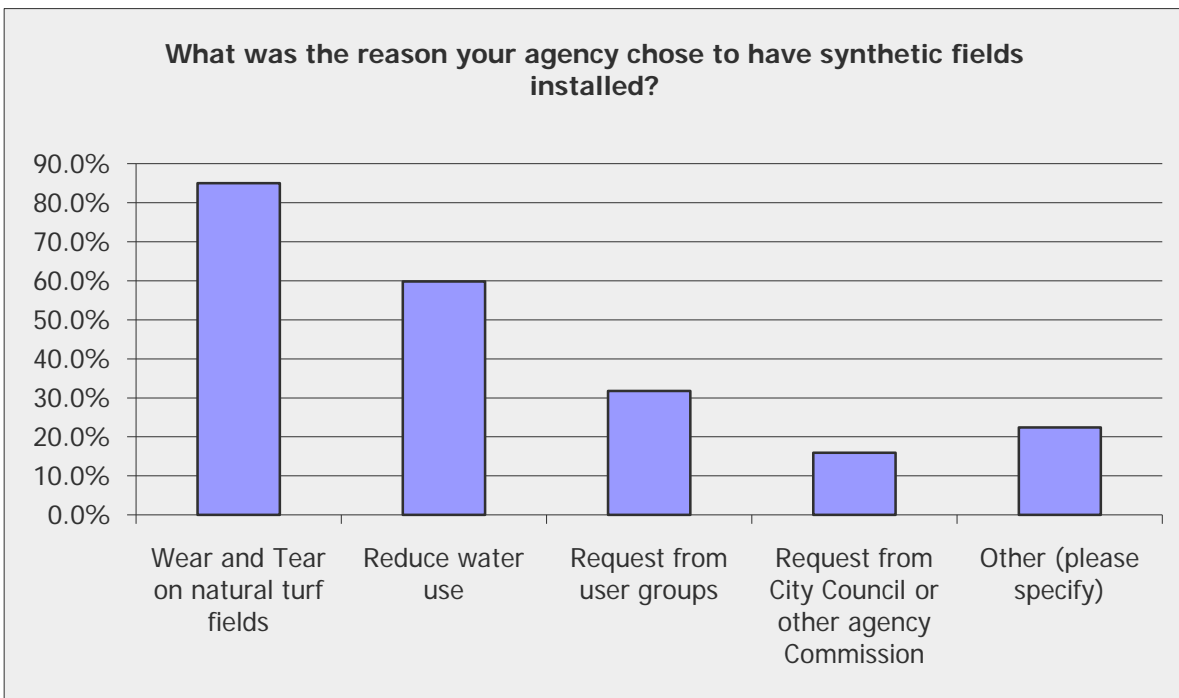
How long have the fields been installed?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year	10.5%	10
1-3 years	50.5%	48
3-7 years	36.8%	35
7 years or more	14.7%	14
<i>answered question</i>		95
<i>skipped question</i>		96



Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



What was the reason your agency chose to have synthetic fields installed?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Wear and Tear on natural turf fields	85.0%	91
Reduce water use	59.8%	64
Request from user groups	31.8%	34
Request from City Council or other agency Commission	15.9%	17
Other (please specify)	22.4%	24
Please Specify		26
<i>answered question</i>		107
<i>skipped question</i>		84



Other

Extended season of use.

Outdoor Soccer Arenas

Also year round play.

Soccer has more than 6000 participants annually and plays year round - will reduce maintenance costs of refurbishing natural grass fields annually.

Not sure, we request permits to use fields. We don't manage them.

more time for high user demand and not enough fields

received grant and pre-used turf to install

Now down time for field recovery

High traffic areas and sloped areas that are hard to maintain

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



What was the reason your agency chose to have synthetic fields installed?

Ability for year round programming.

Reduced maintenance costs durability or competitive use, and reduces water costs. Currently not completely sure we will achieve the water cost reduction.

no mowing

To provide a poor-weather option when natural turf is closed; ability to have higher use hours on a field

Year round usability.

Playing opportunities when grass is not available due to weather

to be able to use fields during the off season when the weather is bad

extended hours and playability in inclement weather

Request from City Manager

received grants to build

Ability to use Redevelopment Funds

We share a facility with the school district and they decided to construct the field.

Significantly increase the number of programmable hours per year on synthetic turf vs. natural turf fields

Less expensive in 12 years.

joint project with school district

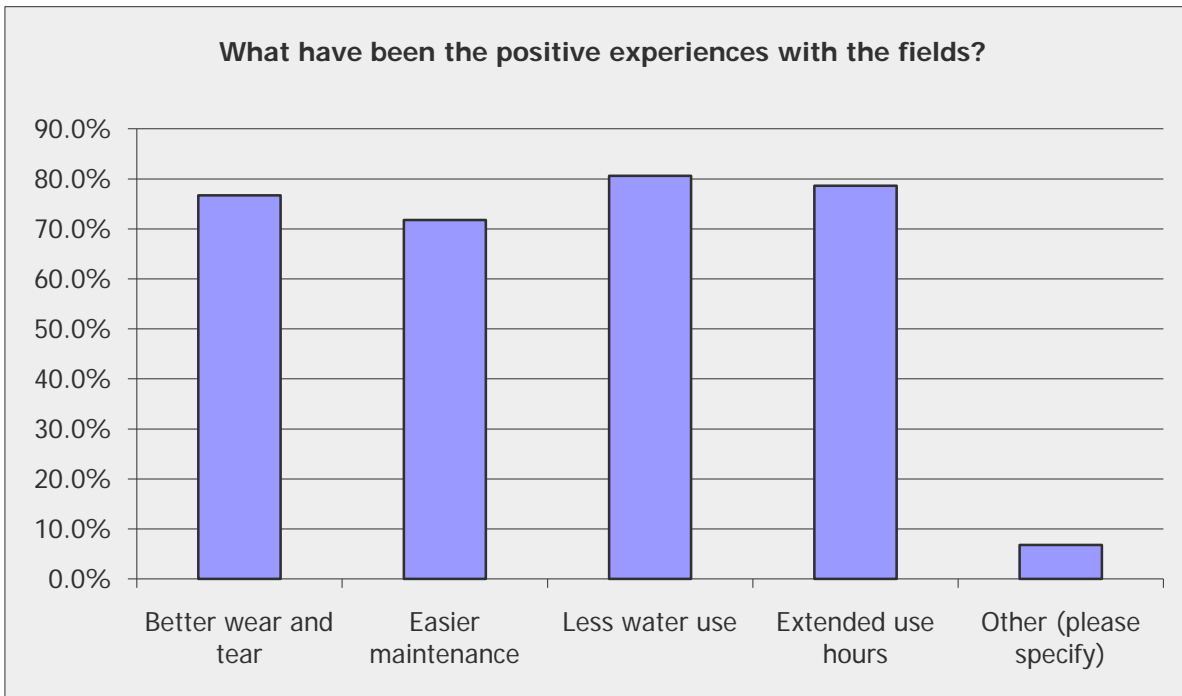
Better field during rainy season

Youth soccer is a year round activity and we close our natural turf fields during rainy season

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



What have been the positive experiences with the fields?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Better wear and tear	76.7%	79
Easier maintenance	71.8%	74
Less water use	80.6%	83
Extended use hours	78.6%	81
Other (please specify)	6.8%	7
Please Specify		9
<i>answered question</i>		103
<i>skipped question</i>		88



Other

Don't open until April but I am hoping all of the above

Nice even surface

good for our application

All weather playing conditions.

From research not experience/

More demand for FieldTurf fields.

of course, more play during a 12 month period

Can be used on the same day as it rains. Do not have to cancel events due to poor field conditions

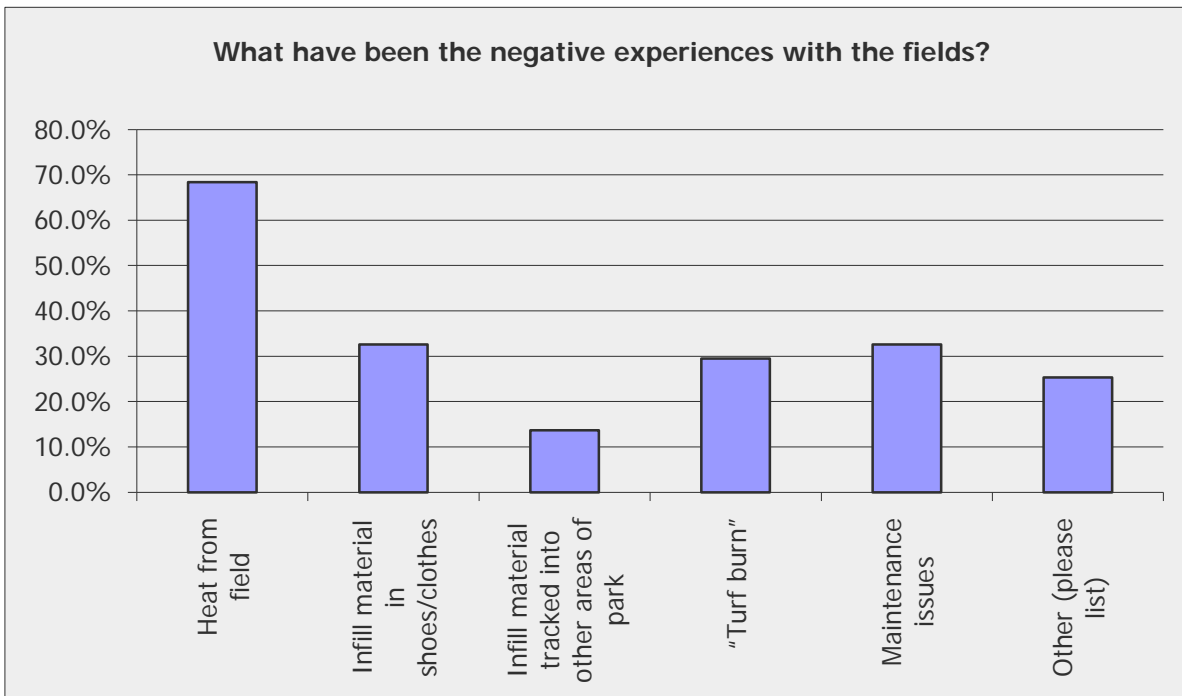
I think it gives a positive image of the City

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



What have been the negative experiences with the fields?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Heat from field	68.4%	65
Infill material in shoes/clothes	32.6%	31
Infill material tracked into other areas of park	13.7%	13
"Turf burn"	29.5%	28
Maintenance issues	32.6%	31
Other (please list)	25.3%	24
Please Specify		35
<i>answered question</i>		95
<i>skipped question</i>		96



Other

Trash/seeds left behind by users can be difficult to remove

We have had a problem with one of the vendors, the second vendor was much better. We haven't had them in place for very long but so far they seem to be holding up pretty well and maintenance is much easier. Staff and the public seem prefer them rather than real turf.

Having to restrict pets, food and material that may compromise the field surface

Working through extensive environmental concerns with the public.

Food issues - monitoring NO gum, NO sunflower seeds, etc.

Don't know yet but understand the heat is an issue in the summer months - would be interested in finding out what agencies have turf and if they have any restrictions in place for cancelling use due to heat

lack of care has significantly ruined the turf

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



What have been the negative experiences with the fields?

It appears that the turf has worn out in the higher traffic areas - middle of the field. This may hasten the replacement timeline.

stain from the grass in clothes and the "stems" are coming up into shoes/socks if we don't keep a lot of fill on it

Maintenance Issue have been improving and are much better than 8 years ago.

Some tearing.

Public health concerns over the lead content in paint and ingestion of rubberized pellets

repairs to damaged turf areas

Again from research not experience

some installation/contract problems

Additional staffing required to keep items off field (gum, driving takes, etc .)

Some public concern over hazards of infill material

cleaning up spilled drinks snuck into the facility.

Issues related to potential lead in product

None at this time

Field does not drain as well as we thought

Non Yet

not having a specialist on staff that can make repairs to torn parts of the field.

vandalism

Limit use for special events.

Loose seams, need to replace infill material, need to maintain more often than originally planned

Cost to re-stripe, clean, and sanitize. Fields get used a lot; groups fighting for time.

have used them in primarily in dog parks. We have concerns regarding how they are attached at the edges.

none

A contractor operates it for us and we have had some issues with his operation

Ours has not lasted as long as we have hoped.

We liked them, it's just after so many years they will wear out, you can only patch them so much.

1. Graffiti on turf. 2. Weeds growing in turf.

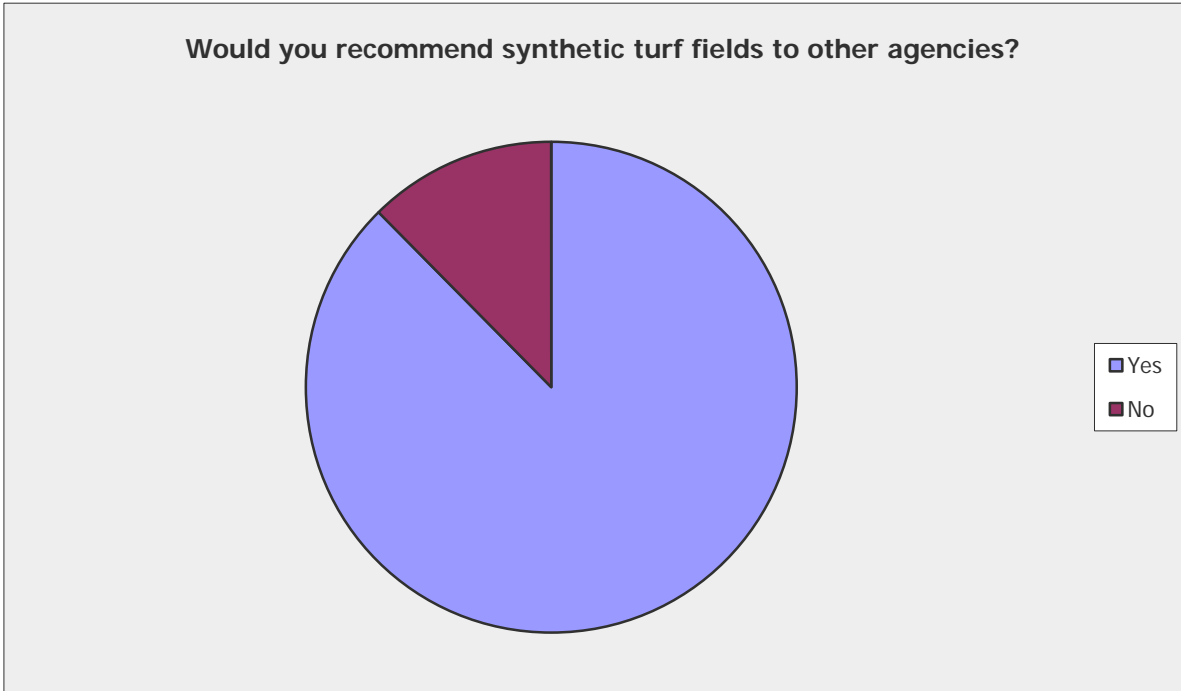
Keeping food and non-water beverage off the field by field users is a challenge.

Expensive when repairs are required

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



Would you recommend synthetic turf fields to other agencies?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	87.6%	99
No	12.4%	14
<i>answered question</i>		113
<i>skipped question</i>		78



Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



Share any other thoughts on your opinions and/or experiences with synthetic turf fields.

Answer Options	Response Count
	72
<i>answered question</i>	72
<i>skipped question</i>	119

Responses

(a) Be aware that syn. turf has limited value during hot weather; (b) follow the maintenance guidelines carefully.

Looking for improvements to materials that will reduce heat.

Water savings has been significant. Synthetic turf also reduces impact on downstream pollution because they don't require fertilizer or other maintenance chemicals.

We have turf infields at our Big League Dreams facility. We have multiple tears in the turf that have needed patch up work done. Also concerned about long term wear and tear, heat from fields, replacement cost and bacteria / sanitary concerns.

Looking towards the installation for one for our community.

It is important to consider maintenance/grooming costs associated with installation of synthetic fields.

We need to maintain greenbelts for natural enjoyment. If every agency begins to install turf, it will just begin to add to global warming when we are trying to decrease global warming. I'd definitely say no!

City installed separate irrigation (Hunter I-40's) to cool field during summer time.

I have worked with college level organizations that have synthetic fields & their biggest complaint is the heat & turf burn issues.

I would be interested in any list that would compile the northern California agencies who currently have synthetic fields.

We are just starting the process and look forward to seeing other agencies experiences and advice.

Benefits include water preservation and mowing, of course, but replacement and disposal costs are a concern that may cost more in the long term than natural fields and have been the deterrent, in part, for us not having made the investment thus far.

Make sure that you have a consultant that has a great track record for project management/installation. Since most of the products are made at the same factory, the key is a good installation.

Agency needs to fiscally plan for the eventual replacement of the turf in 8 to 10 years

The issue at hand for us is education of management

Please share the survey results with us - obviously, we would be very interested! Thanks!

A local high school has a synthetic turf field (Atwater High School) and the public can not get near it. The stadium area went from a jogging track and community area to an exclusive use area. Paid for they local tax dollars.

None at this time but would appreciate learning any pitfalls and solutions to those

During the summer months in Sacramento the fields are brutally hot. Cooling systems are a must and care must be taken when youth participants utilize the facilities.

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



Share any other thoughts on your opinions and/or experiences with synthetic turf fields.

Cost is the only thing prohibiting us from changing more fields to Synth.Turf

Overall the experience has been positive but the jury is still out on whether the City would install synthetic turf at any other locations. Long term field wear and potential health risks are still concerns that will need to be followed and evaluated as the field is used more.

I am a landscape architect, but wanted to comment as a coach of a club soccer team. My players do not favor the synthetic fields due to heat and abrasions to their legs.

The life span of the turf is less than 10 years and the cost is around \$8/S.F. The annual maintenance cost of regular turf is about \$0.20/S.F., therefore it will take 40 years to breakeven and recover the initial installation cost assuming that the synthetic turf maintenance cost is zero and not including the reinstallation cost every 10 years.

We recently installed synthetic turf in our dog park - so far it is working out well.

These are great options for providing play surfaces that are safe and aesthetically pleasing year round. The only draw back is that I believe that the programmers need to take a hard look at how the fields are used in 100+ degree days. The field temps often exceed 140 degrees. I would like to see limited daytime use during extreme heat but this will take a cultural shift in thinking.

We have looked at synthetic turf for our medians, to conserve water and present run-off

We are looking to install synthetic turf as part of a new infield/soccer/football field for a track that is being pursued in Mammoth Lakes. We will be interested to see other's recent experiences with synthetic turf.

Our City currently has a drought ordinance for watering in place and the use of this material has and will allow for continued use of the fields while reducing the need for water resources.

The installation of the synthetic turf is a large jump for my agency. The current ratings or options found either love them or hate them. The middle ground does not seem to exist. We are optimistic and hoping to see reduced costs, good durability reduced water usage and a positive response from the user groups.

We would really enjoy getting the results of this survey

The application and conditions need to be evaluated carefully. We have an outstanding issue on installation. Our high school district is in litigation over installation issues.

What is the current information on the allegations that the artificial turfs had lead in the paint, and would cause staph infections?

I don't have any fields at my current agency but did install them at a previous agency.

Some in my community are concerned that synthetic turf presents various health hazards.

The investment in synthetic turf fields is a key strategy for any agency looking to provide a high quality playing surface, while limiting its operations and maintenance expense.

My opinion is that it is the trend for Recreation Depts. I can not speak for our Director but I know he has mentioned that is something that our department would like to do. Whether new fields or renovation of turf fields. I have a putting at my home and love it.

Synthetic turf is a 'tool in the tool box'. It is not a panacea. It does allow higher use hours but still requires regular maintenance and does have some other drawbacks (eg. heat). It is not a preferred surface over properly maintained natural turf. Synthetic fields should be fenced off from 'walk-on' use and food and sodas should not be allowed on the surface. Finally, replacement costs in 8 - 10 years should be considered when choosing to go to synthetic.

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



Share any other thoughts on your opinions and/or experiences with synthetic turf fields.

Don't like their carbon footprint, heat absorption, injury problems.

All of our fields are used for Soccer. Since the fields have been installed the overall hours of field availability has increased. The fields are playable when other natural grass fields are not. One of our local school districts are planning to install five more synthetic fields starting next year. Maintenance is minimal but annual or bi-annual machine grooming should be done. Once we have enough of them it will be cost effective for the district to purchase the grooming equipment.

They are not without issues.

We put turf rotor irrigation heads around the perimeter of the fields to assist with super hot days in August and Sept., used them sparingly but it really benefited the players.

On a personal note, my kids occasionally play on synthetic fields for tournaments they attend. Some schools/jurisdictions are very diligent in having ample staff on hand to enforce the no food/no drinks other than water policy. It's a pain to do (having to be the turf cops), but ultimately necessary to ensure good conditions for all.

what grants are available to seek funding sources for synthetic fields??

We have Fieldturf brand of synthetic turf, so this my only experience. We looked at other brands that appeared to be inferior and I don't know how they wear. We received a ten year warranty with Fieldturf and they inspect their product continuously.

Here in Daly City we only have on synthetic field which is used for soccer only, it has held up well and works good for soccer.

Mike Shull from City of LA could probably give some good feed back for those who ask.
Mark Mariscal- Region Superintendent.

concerns over health issues and sanitization practices needed for the fields.

The positives far outweigh the negatives. There are many competitors out there and they are all chasing FieldTurf, the industry leader. Many are making wild, unsubstantiated claims that reduce the credibility of the entire industry.

Manufacturers need to be more accountable. We have a number of fields that the seams are failing causing trip hazards. They advertise 10 yr warranty but then blame seam failures on wear and tear.

There doesn't seem to be a real benefit from synthetic turfs. They still require manpower and time to maintain. Sure, synthetic doesn't need as much water (the only benefit over regular turf that I see, here, in California), but it doesn't have the "self-healing" qualities that live turf has; synthetic needs to be "fluffed" every so often. Unless we were to see substantial cost savings over regular turf, synthetic just doesn't make sense.

when it comes to professional sports they have gone away from the synthetic turf due to the extensive injuries incurred and now to save money we want our children and young adults to have these injuries exposed to them or is it that or pros get paid not to get hurt ?

As mentioned, our synthetic field were not lockable and the public could use them at any time. This made them very difficult to maintain. Plus the added staff time to monitor fields defeated all the savings of the product.

We are planning two fields for early spring installation. These fields will probably need to utilize an organic infill. Also planning a synthetic field in a future park development.

Still researching . However, until there is better design with regards to heat gain and sanitation, we probably would not install.

Synthetic Turf Fields - What is your opinion?



Share any other thoughts on your opinions and/or experiences with synthetic turf fields.

If you have a facility that you do Major Special events on, don't place the synthetic turf on that field. It restricts the use, because of the additional prep that need to take place to accommodate large equipment.

The synthetic turf fields have been an big asset to our Sports Complex. It allows us to run multiple events/ practices at the same time. We have two fields with the in-fill rubber, one padded open turf that was laid over concrete and another artificial turf field (arena) that was laid over concrete and we had walled in that is quite popular.

My daughter had a soccer game two weeks ago and the field was generating so much heat it was like being on a black top playground. There needs to be a some type of cooling element invented for turf.

They contain toxins and require periodic disinfecting.

We installed a sprinkler system to cool down the field on the hottest days which works very well.

Our agency is planning to charge more on synthetic turf. We currently charge \$2 an hour for youths, \$20 for adults, private, & commercial groups. How much do other agencies charge for synthetic turf?

Santa Ana Stadium went from approx. 55 days of programming to 363 days of programming after Field Turf was installed.

Synthetic fields are not nearly as 'fragile' as people think. We will save a lot of money in field maintenance right away.

We will be installing a synthetic soccer field in one of our parks. It will require special maintenance due to the dynamics involved.

I like natural grass more than artificial, but those fields get torn up from too much use.

I think they are good with limitations. I think grass may have a better impact on the local and global environment. Grass breaks down some waste and pollution (sweat, spit, dust, etc) and may help with storm water infiltration back in to the aquifer. As a synthetic it must be manufactured and replaced after its useful life, thus adding more to the waste stream. Because it is still relatively new the full negative impacts may not yet be felt. Some people are concerned with chemicals and pollution that may be emitted by the natural breakdown of the synthetic. Though the industry may disprove this, I think time will provide the only true test.

Most agencies should consider lights when looking to invest in synthetic fields as winter is the critical time for these fields and lights are a must to make it cost effective.

The key is to set aside enough money over say a 10 year period to be able to replace them when the time comes.

Because of soccer all department will have to turn to turfs because of tear. Also public demand will cause fields to be build.

User groups love it. It allows for extended use for all.

Development of a cooler infill material is needed.