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## L.A. Schools Worry About Toxic Playgrounds

By ELIZABETH BANICKI

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LOS ANGELES (CN) - Los Angeles Unified School District says the company it hired to install artificial turf on school playgrounds did not inform it that it would underlay the turf with carcinogens - carbon black and lead, in crumb rubber - that would come into direct contact with children.

LAUSD hired Forever Green Athletic Fields of the West in 2005 to artificial turf systems on playgrounds and playing fields at 13 schools.

In its Superior Court complaint, the school district says it knew that one of the materials used would be crumb rubber, which contains lead and carbon black. But LAUSD says it did not know that the chemicals would be in direct contact with children who play on the turf.

The state of California says lead and carbon black are known to cause cancer, reproductive harm, neurological harm, decreased IQ and developmental toxicity. The chemicals can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

LAUSD says it "understood that the crumb rubber would be applied only as an underlayment, as a foundational layer beneath the upper artificial grass turf," and that it would not be in direct human contact.

But Forever Green used it as "infill" between plots of synthetic grass in places where it would be in contact with children and exposed to intense sunshine and heat, which contribute to the breakdown and release of chemicals, according to the complaint.

LAUSD claims Forever Green knew that the crumb rubber was being sold throughout California in large quantities. The chemical exposure was "knowing and intentional," the district says.

The district issued a Proposition 65 violation notice in November 2009 and sent it to the California Attorney General and the Los Angeles City Attorney.

The district alleges violation of Proposition 65, breach of contract, product liability and negligence. It seeks civil penalties, compensation and costs.

LAUSD is represented by Barry Govegan with Musick, Peeler & Garrett.

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