

Parents Coalition of Montgomery County, Maryland

Dedicated to improving responsiveness and performance of Montgomery County Public Schools

Saturday, March 28, 2009

Artificial Turf: A Tale of Lead Levels

Ok, this is a long one, folks, but stick with me here...this is a tale of how an artificial turf company, one FieldTurfTarkett, successfully lobbied the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to make sure that their product, artificial turf, became excluded from the testing that is required of all products having to do with children: the requirement to get tested for lead levels. As you recall, FieldTurfTarkett is MCPS' preferred contractor for all the artificial turf in the county. So, here goes...

FieldTurfTarkett hired Van Fleet Associates, a lobbying firm in Alexandria, VA, to lobby the Consumer Products Safety Commission. What issue FieldTurfTarkett was so worried about? Why, lead levels in artificial turf, of course. In 2007 and 2008, according to [records online](#), FieldTurfTarkett paid Van Fleet Associates \$20,000 to meet with the CPSC. [Records show](#) that on May 12, 2008 CPSC Commissioner Thomas Moore and Michael Gougisha, Counselor to Commissioner Moore, met with a group of people representing the artificial turf industry. The group include Rick Doyle, the president of the Synthetic Turf Council; Joseph Motz, the chairman of the Synthetic Turf Council; Stanley Greene, the President and CEO of Sprinturf, and Walter Sanders, from said Van Fleet Associates. Jim Petrucelli, of FieldTurfTarkett, is on the Board of Directors for the Synthetic Turf Council; he was not in attendance at this meeting

Why did this group need to meet with CPSC? Coming up was [H.R. 4040](#), An Act to establish consumer product safety standards and other safety requirements for children's products and to reauthorize and modernize the Consumer Product Safety Commission. President Obama, then Senator Obama, was a sponsor of the bill. Part of the bill, later, law, discussed lead levels in 'children's products' and requires the above-mentioned testing.

Mr. Sanders started off the discussion by stating that the

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purpose of the meeting was to correct any misperceptions about synthetic turf that might be the result of recent lead testing of artificial turf fields in New Jersey. Mr. Motz then added that the Synthetic Turf Council wanted to work with the CPSC to develop "a strategy for addressing any health concerns raised by lead levels in synthetic turf."

Mr. Gougisha, the Counselor to Commissioner asked if synthetic turf as used in artificial turf sports fields would be considered a children's product as defined by any legislation. Mr. Sanders said that it wouldn't. Commissioner Moore then explained that was important because children's products which contain lead above certain levels would be banned.

The meeting sounds like it was a good one for FieldTurfTarkett. A few days later, on May 15, 2008, we read a letter from Mr. Doyle to Commissioner Moore, which reads in part,

"We are particularly appreciative of your admonition to ensure that our product does not become categorized as a "children's product" within the meaning of eventual conference agreement on H.R. 4040. We have taken your comments to heart and are in the process of communicating our concerns to members of the conference committee."

Why did the artificial turf industry work so hard to avoid being labeled a 'children's product?'

If artificial turf were to be classified as a 'children's product,' lead levels would have to meet stringent standards. Turf samples would be required to be tested to verify that they met the standards. The testing would have to be conducted at independent CPSC-certified labs. Now that will not happen.

And the moral of the story is?? Sorry, don't have a clever one tonight. Just remember the rules for playing on artificial turf: when your child gets off the field, have them take off their clothes and turn them inside out; and wash immediately. Oh, and don't get any of that nasty tire crumb on your skin.

Posted by freestategal at [12:03 AM](#) 

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Mary Swan Bell, MS
Marin County, California

[April 6, 2009 10:42 AM](#)

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Principles

The Parents' Coalition of Montgomery County, Maryland seeks to achieve the goals of coherent, content-rich curriculum standards; high expectations combined with timely remediation and acceleration; a wider range of educational options for parents and children; greater transparency and accountability; and meaningful community input.

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