

# San Francisco Synthetic Fields

**20 ACRES** of San Francisco neighborhood grass parks replaced, (*& counting*)

- Bulletin Board Page -

*"Putting children's health at risk is not the answer to a budgetary challenge." -Dr. Benjamin Spock*

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## News Releases on Synthetic Fields (November-December 2008)

*(San Francisco video clips & advocacy web sites at bottom of page)*

### **Connecticut - (January 2009),**

Connecticut State Representative Kim Fawcett will seek a moratorium on the installation of new synthetic turf fields until "such time as an honest assessment of its risk can be had."

### **New York City, NY - (December 23, 2008)**

Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, a former New York City Parks Department Commissioner, and Geoffrey Croft of NYC Park Advocates today called on the city to issue an immediate moratorium of the installation of artificial turf fields.

Gotbaum, New York City's Public Advocate and NYC Park Advocates. (The office of Public Advocate, the City's watchdog and New Yorkers' ombudsman is an elective office. Gotbaum was elected Public Advocate in 2001, and re-elected in 2005.)

Public Advocate Gotbaum said, "For two years, I have called for independent physical testing of the synthetic turf in our parks. For two years, the city has dragged its heels, insisting that there was no cause for concern. And now, the city has announced that it is closing a synthetic turf field because of elevated lead levels. While I am glad to see the city listened to us and began testing turf fields, we don't know how many people have been exposed to this lead hazard. What we do know is that the city can no longer ignore our concerns. I expect a full and public disclosure of the results of the testing currently underway, and I renew my call for an immediate moratorium on the installation of new synthetic turf until New Yorkers can be assured that it is safe."

"The fact that the city could not be bothered to conduct a single environmental study in ten years before spending more than \$ 150 million dollars speaks volumes," said Geoffrey Croft, president of NYC Park Advocates. "Dumping more than 50 million pounds of a product which is wildly known to contain a host of metals, including lead, arsenic and cadmium, into our park system is irresponsible at best. The city should instead be installing natural grass which cleans the air and filters out harmful particulate matter and provides a host of other environmental benefits."

In April, 2007 Public Advocate Gotbaum called for independent testing of rubber pellets that may potentially pose serious health risks to New Yorkers. The rubber pellets, used in more than 70 athletic fields throughout the city, are made from recycled tires that contain chemicals that have been linked to birth defects, cancer and other health problems. The health risks to families and kids playing on the turf remain unknown.

#### **Seoul, South Korea - (December 22, 2008)**

Carcinogens found in school turf field. The Korea Times reported, "Substances that can cause cancer have been found in artificial turf at schools. A large amount of poisonous metals and other harmful materials were found in man-made fields of three schools inspected at the beginning of this month." One school tested for 290 mg of lead, three times the allowed 90mg, and the other two measured 46.7mg and 810mg of polyaromatic hydrocarbon, which included Beazopyrene, respectively.

#### **Temple Daily Telegram, Texas - (December 18, 2008)**

An independent test of the field at Ratliff found lead "at roughly 14 times the EPA standard," while a test of the turf at Birville ISD facility found a lead level nearly 10 times the EPA standard. The test at the Birdville stadium "also found about twice the EPA limit for lead in drinking water in the runoff from the field, an indication that the lead is being released into the environment."

#### **Tacoma, Washington on (December 16, 2008)**

Keith Eldridge of KOMO-TV (Seattle Washington) reported on a cluster of soccer players at Tacoma High School who have been diagnosed with cancer. There have been tests that have shown the presence of carcinogens in artificial turf fields. *(Note; video footage of San Francisco's synthetic fields were used in the broadcast news story to help illustrate the problem.)*

#### **New York City, NY - (December 11, 2008)**

Philip Landrigan, M.D., M.Sc: a professor of pediatrics and director of the Children's Environmental Health Center at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, concluded the following regarding artificial turf; We are suddenly, and belatedly, beginning to realize they may lead to health problems, such as:

1. Extreme heat. On hot summer days, temperatures of over 130 degrees Fahrenheit have been recorded a few feet above the surface of synthetic turf fields - the altitude where children play. Vigorous play in these conditions conveys a very real risk of heat stress or heat stroke.
2. MRSA skin infections. Outbreaks of skin infections caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* have been documented in children who play on synthetic turf fields (New England Journal of Medicine, February 2005).
3. Chemical hazards to human health and the environment. Crumb rubber, a major component of current generation synthetic turf fields, is typically made from ground-up recycled tires containing styrene and 1, 3-butadiene, the major constituents of synthetic rubber. Styrene is toxic to the nervous system, and butadiene is a proven human carcinogen.

Lead was recently found in synthetic turf fields in New Jersey at levels so high that several fields were closed by the state Health Department. Citizens and school boards should question the wisdom of installing

synthetic turf until a credible independent study has been conducted and published."

**Consumer Reports - (December 7, 2009)**

Jim Guest the president of Consumer Union wrote,

"New legislation will essentially eliminate lead in all children's products, require safety testing of toys before they hit the market, ... And then there are those artificial-turf playing fields. Various government agencies are at odds over whether the levels of lead found in some of them should worry us. CU thinks it should, and we've asked the appropriate agencies to assess all risks and not ignore research that raises concerns."

**Springfield, Ill - (November 25, 2008)**

The Illinois Attorney General's office is reviewing the factual and legal issues relating to children's exposure to lead in artificial turf fields. "Our office is currently reviewing all of the factual and legal issues in an effort to ensure that human and the environment are protected and that manufacturers of artificial turf are complying with the environmental laws,"

**University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey** issued a press release, which set forth the findings of a scientific investigation into absorption of lead from artificial turf infill crumb rubber granules into gastric fluids. "[A] new study by researchers at the UMDNJ-School of Public Health finds that when children or athletes ingest the tiny rubber granules in synthetic turf, it is likely that a significant portion of the lead in the granules will be absorbed by their bodies' gastric fluids,".

**Dallas Texas,**

Fields in two well-known high school stadiums, including the one made famous by the book and movie "Friday Night Lights," were announced to have lead levels far exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency's standard for soil, according to independent tests.

**Demarset and Old Tappan (Bergen County), New Jersey:**

Elevated levels of lead found on FieldTurf fields. A sample taken of the green turf fibers of Old Tappan's field was 10 times the state standard." According to the Record, "The state recommends restricting the use of fields for children under the age of 7. If the fields are used, they should be watered down to suppress dust and hand, body and clothes should be washed thoroughly. The most conservative recommendation is to close the field." "We want to take every precaution to find out exactly what we have... before we let anybody go back on the fields," said Ray Jacobus, the assistant superintendent for business.

**Wayne, New Jersey,**

Wayne, New Jersey has decided to change the color of the stripes (lines) on its soccer field from yellow to black, over concerns about the yellow stripes containing high levels of lead.

**Northern New Jersey:**

Turf at Ramapo and Indian Hills high schools test positive for lead; closed to summer sports.

### **Sacramento, Calif.:**

A bill to investigate synthetic turf passes the Senate by a vote of 28 to 6. On May 12, 2008, the California Senate passed SB 1277, authored by Senator Abel Maldonado (R-Santa Maria). It will require the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, in conjunction with the Department of Public Health and California Integrated Waste Management Board, conduct a study investigating the health and environmental impacts of natural versus synthetic turf fields.

Maldonado commented. "Excessive levels of lead on some older fields in New Jersey prompted the closure of two fields. It is important that we know our children are using safe and healthy playing surfaces." Synthetic turf fields, which have increased in popularity over the past several years, are made up of a combination of polyethylene plastics and recycled tires. The presence of volatile organic chemicals from these tires, as well as deadly bacteria that can remain on the synthetic grass blades, has prompted several states to take a closer look at potential negative impacts associated with these fields.

Studies have shown that athletes who use synthetic turf are seven times more likely to receive open skin lesions (referred to as turf burn). These open lesions are often the source of contracting and vehicle for spreading dangerous infections. In fact, a 2003 study of MRSA infections among St. Louis Rams football players found that all eight MRSA infections began at turf burn sites.

"Medical experts have found that staphylococci and other bacteria can survive on polyethylene plastic, the compound used to make synthetic turf blades, for more than 90 days. Blood, sweat, skin cells and other materials can remain on the synthetic turf because the fields are not washed or cleaned. In short, playing on these fields is like playing on a giant used band aid. I am glad to see that the Senate recognized the importance of further investigating the safety of these fields," Maldonado concluded.

### **Redwood City, Calif. - Palo Alto Daily News - (November 15, 2008)**

The artificial turf field at Hoover Park in Redwood City still has two years left on its 8-year lifecycle warranty,

but already it has begun to show what the paper calls "a 5 o'clock shadow all day long."

According to *News*, "The city council last week green-lighted spending \$905,447 on the upgrade, The Parks Superintendent Gary Hover reportedly told *News* "We knew from day one that FieldTurf, who was the manufacturer of this product, was very concerned about it lasting because it got a lot of use." According to *News*, "The city said it circumvented a competitive bidding process for the project, which is usually required by state law, because Oregon-based FieldTurf's discounted price of about 40 percent off was not available from other suppliers."

*(FieldTurf is a supplier of San Francisco's artificial surfaces)*

### **Chicago, Illinois - (November 3, 2008)**

The Great Lakes Centers for Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health has issued the following

statement: "We believe that the data collected by multiple researchers and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention demonstrate the need to conduct a risk assessment. Until a risk assessment is conducted we strongly urge park planners to stick with regular grass fields instead of installing a product that may harbor bacteria, function as a heat sink, and may contain chemicals which are hazardous to children."

### **Illesheim, Germany:**

A lead test was conducted on the artificial turf field at the U.S. Army Garrison, Ansbach's Storck Barracks in Illesheim, Bavaria, Germany. It showed lead levels above the recommended level for lead, according to the garrison's public affairs office. According to a news story in Stars and Stripes, this is the fourth playground at a U.S. base in Germany to test above recommended levels for lead, after playgrounds in Grafenwöhr, Baumholder and Kaiserslautern's Kleber Kaserne. The Illeheim facility is now closed until the playground is replaced.

### **Newton, Massachusetts**

re: The City of San Francisco's Synthetic Playfields Task Force Report.

In February 2008, the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department convened a task force to tackle the question of health and environmental concerns raised by synthetic playfields.

SynTurf.org reviewed the report and concluded;

"The Report is a masterpiece of obfuscation. It defends the use of artificial playfields and promotes the continued installation of artificial turf fields in the San Francisco area for some time to come. The Report's tone is defensive of Recreation and Park Department's long-held view that the turf fields are fine and the answer to increasing need for playing surfaces. With a few exceptions, there is not much critical thinking or even adequate research into the topics that the Task Force has addressed."

<http://www.synturf.org/sanfranciscobrief.html>

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## **VIDEO CLIPS**

ABC News - Synthetic Fields (2:06)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PQCpKmw0pA&feature=channel>

San Francisco's Artificial Playfields - Skin Infections (2:15)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQvj3F2Zg6k&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQvj3F2Zg6k&feature=channel_page)

San Francisco's Synthetic Playfields - Ingestion (2:28)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zsodulEmz0&feature=channel>

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## **SAN FRANCISCO ADVOCACY WEB SITES**

**"New Problems with Fake Turf"** - Richmond Review / Sunset Beacon

<http://sfparks.googlepages.com/richmondreview>

**"No Artificial Turf In San Francisco":** <http://www.webwaddle.com/nosyntheticurf.html>

**"Prop A Deception":** <http://www.webwaddle.com/deception.html>

**"Why is San Francisco Filling Acres of Neighborhood Parks with 1000s of Tons of Hazardous Waste?"**

<http://sfparks.googlepages.com/home>

SF Parks news links; <http://sfparks.googlepages.com/links>

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