



# FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

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## Park Authority Responds to Concerns About Synthetic Turf Safety

The Fairfax County Park Authority currently has 17 synthetic turf fields installed or under construction. In response to concerns about high lead levels found in older, nylon synthetic turf fields in New Jersey, the Park Authority has solicited information about lead content from the manufacturers of all synthetic turf fields installed by the Park Authority which are made of a newer generation of polyethylene synthetics. They confirm local fields contain only trace amounts of any heavy metals, well below international environmental standards (including the DIN 18035-7 standard, that governs environmental compatibility). Based on information received from the industry we continue to believe that fields in Fairfax County do not pose any hazard to the public.

Acting Park Authority Director Timothy White put the issue in perspective noting, "There is no indication that the fields we have in Fairfax County have high lead content. The fields in New Jersey are the old astro-turf type made from nylon. The lead is in the coloring of the fibers. Our fields are not nylon, they are polyethylene and the pigments are encapsulated in the fibers."

Letters have been received from FieldTurf Tarkett, General Sports Venue, Sportexe and Sprinturf and their fiber manufacturers certifying their products are polyethylene and contain only trace amounts of lead chromate in the fibers. Lead chromate is a chemical compound that has been used widely in the inorganic pigments used to provide color fastness to a wide variety of products, including synthetic turf. During the manufacturing process, such pigments are encapsulated within the products. This encapsulation process prevents the leaching of pigments from the finished product.

Although testing can determine the amount of lead encapsulated, there is no current standard that can compare that level to health dangers, given the encapsulated environment. The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) has tested 12 artificial turf fields and found that there are "very low or undetectable levels of lead" in the polyethylene fibers. However, the NJDHSS stated that "high levels of lead" were found in the nylon turf fibers - old style, carpet-like fibers that are not even remotely similar to fields in Fairfax County.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) will be reviewing the matter. The Park Authority will continue to monitor emerging information pertaining to health or environmental concerns regarding synthetic turf and provide any needed updates.

For more information contact the Public Information Office at 703-324-8662.

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