



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

March 23, 2016

The Honorable Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building, 2nd floor
101 Monroe St., Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Leggett:

We are writing to ask that you have the county--owned artificial turf fields tested at least for the toxic substances that are currently required to be regulated in children's products. The EPA and CPSC are currently deferring to states and localities for decisions on testing and enforcement.

The plastic "blades" (all colors) and the carpet backing should be tested at least for total lead content, chromium, cadmium and phthalates.

The tire-crumbs infill should also be tested: each field needs many widely spaced samples because toxic substances (chemicals and heavy metals) may be present in high and low levels in different areas of the same field.

Earlier this month a representative for an artificial turf manufacturer admitted to the Maryland Ways & Means Committee that artificial turf fields do contain lead.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6I6C869I3Q>

A relatively recent (2014) peer-reviewed scientific study by Rutgers University researchers found lead (and other toxic substances) in both the plastic carpet fibers and tire crumb infill of **even new** field materials, noting: "the variability of lead contained in the infill material is large and can span more than two orders of magnitude."

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4038666/pdf/nihms565643.pdf>

In a recent study conducted by researchers at Yale University, the lead researcher stated that the shredded tires contain a "veritable witches brew of toxic substances."

http://www.ehhi.org/turf/new_study_jun2015.shtml and <http://www.ehhi.org/turf/findings0815.shtml>

Artificial turf fields are under increased scrutiny by the public at least partly because of a University of Washington soccer coach's "cancer count" of young, longtime players on athletic turf fields. In addition, the federal government has retracted various previous reassuring statements and is embarking on further studies.¹

Given the above information links, we urge you to conduct testing immediately of the County's artificial turf fields - the blades, the carpet backing and the tire crumb infill. We also request that the testing be done by a reputable, experienced lab that is independent. Yale University, and the non-profit Environment and Human Health (EHHI) should be able to provide information about the criteria for identifying an appropriate lab.

We are also available to help in this effort as needed.

Thank you,



Marc Elrich



Roger Berliner



Tom Hucker



George Leventhal



Nancy Navarro



Hans Riemer

¹ 1. In May 2015, before a subcommittee of the Congressional Energy and Commerce Committee, the chair of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Elliot Kaye, withdrew the agency's previous assurances about artificial turf. Chairman Kaye agreed under questioning that his agency's statement was at least misleading: "[our statement that artificial turf fields are] OK to play on...means something to parents that I don't think we intended to convey and I don't think we should have conveyed." (Testimony before US House Energy and Commerce Committee's Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade Subcommittee, May 21, 2015) 2. Also in 2015 the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stamped its reassuring artificial turf press release as "outdated" and has backed away from efforts to promote "recycling" tires. (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d0cf6618525a9efb85257359003fb69d/c8d28e3f9f3ca0a4852576880053bed4!OpenDocument>) 3. Following a letter to President Obama from Senators Bill Nelson (FL) and Richard Blumenthal (CT), the President directed the EPA, CDC division on toxins, and CPSC to initiate a joint study on synthetic turf. (<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/artificial-turf-debate/feds-finally-take-action-crumb-rubber-turf-n517726> ; <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeozanian/2016/02/13/government-finally-to-look-into-possible-link-between-artificial-turf-and-cancer/#64110c3630cf>)