

# Warning Signs: Synthetic/Artificial Turf Surfaces

## Overview

This overview is provided by the Safe Healthy Playing Fields Coalition ([www.SafeHealthyPlayingFields.org](http://www.SafeHealthyPlayingFields.org)) to inform decision makers and residents of the current warnings by federal (CPSC, CDC and EPA) and local entities to users of synthetic or artificial turf (AT). The "heat island" effects (<http://www.synturf.org/heateffect.html>) and warnings (<http://www.synturf.org/warnings.html>) in the use of synthetic turf are well known and well documented.

## Federal Recommendations and Health Advisory Warnings

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in its response to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) Request for Correction 13002<sup>1</sup>, notes the following recommendations for users of synthetic turf surfaces:

*Both the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that young children wash their hands frequently after playing outside and always before they eat. The EPA also recommends these practices.<sup>2</sup>*

The CDC Health Advisory<sup>3</sup> warning the public of potential exposure to lead in artificial turf states:

*To protect the public, in particular young children, consider posting signs indicating that:*

- 1. After playing on the field, individuals are encouraged to perform aggressive hand and body washing for at least 20 seconds using soap and warm water.*
- 2. Clothes worn on the field should be taken off and turned inside out as soon as possible after using the field to avoid tracking contaminated dust to other places. In vehicles, people can sit on a large towel or blanket if it is not feasible to remove their clothes. These clothes, towels, and blankets should be washed separately and shoes worn on the field should be kept outside of the home.*
- 3. Eating while on the field or turf product is discouraged.*
- 4. Avoid contaminating drinking containers with dust and fibers from the field. When not drinking, close them and keep them in a bag, cooler, or other covered container on the side of the field.*

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<sup>1</sup> RFC 13002, March 2013, <http://epa.gov/quality/informationguidelines/documents/13002.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> EPA publication titled The Use of Recycled Tire Materials on Playgrounds & Artificial Turf Fields [http://www.peer.org/assets/docs/epa/12\\_23\\_13\\_EPA\\_retraction.pdf](http://www.peer.org/assets/docs/epa/12_23_13_EPA_retraction.pdf), as published with retraction in response to PEER Request for Correction, December 16, 2013, [http://www.epa.gov/nerl/features/tire\\_crumbs.html](http://www.epa.gov/nerl/features/tire_crumbs.html).

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory published 18 June 2008 <http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/25186> on Potential exposure to lead in artificial turf: public health issues, actions, and recommendations.

## Local Warnings and Recommendations - Maryland

Montgomery County Parks Department has posted signs at its artificial turf fields. In a report to the Montgomery County Council Education Committee they state that "the following language was incorporated into the permit for parks artificial turf fields and posted on signs at each field":

*WARNING: This field can get very hot on warm, sunny days. If you experience symptoms of heat-related illness, such as dizziness, weakness, headache, vomiting, or muscle cramps, move to a shaded area. Drink water, rest, and seek medical attention if you do not feel better. In extreme temperatures, please cease all activities and get off of the artificial turf field.*<sup>4</sup>

Montgomery County Public Schools have developed guidelines printed in its athletics handbook:

*Artificial surface fields generate greater heat than natural surface fields on warm and hot days. Anytime the outdoor temperature exceeds 80 degrees, coaches should exercise caution in conducting activities on artificial surface fields. When temperatures exceed 90 degrees, coaches may hold one regular morning or evening practice (before noon or after 5:00 pm); coaches must restrict practices between noon and 5:00 pm to one-hour, with water breaks every 20 minutes. Code red or code purple guidelines prevail, if applicable.*<sup>5</sup>

Montgomery County's Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) agency reported to the County Council Education Committee that CUPF will begin including information about heat-related issues with artificial turf in the spring of 2013. From CUPF:

*Permits that include the language below are currently being issued for requests submitted during the December/January window for use of artificial turf fields beginning this spring.*

*'If you experience symptoms of a heat related illness, take appropriate action. During periods of excessive heat, vacate the field and alert the CUPF Emergency Line (240-777-2727) that you are leaving'*

*Requests for refunds will be honored provided heat conditions forcing the cancellation are consistent with current weather conditions.'*

*In addition, information advising artificial turf users about the conditions of use and the refund policy will be updated on our field webpage by the end of the month.*<sup>6</sup>

The [Safe, Healthy Playing Fields Coalition \(SHPFC\)](http://www.SafeHealthyPlayingFields.org) is a group of scientists, parents and athletes from across the US concerned about the lack of regulation of artificial turf (AT) fields; health issues for the children playing in the heat and inhaling toxins off gassing from AT fields; environmental concerns for the streams into which chemicals from AT fields are washed. The SHPFC is dedicated to sharing information about the costs, health and safety of both natural and synthetic turf fields for children, adults and the environment in which we live. Properly built, properly maintained grass fields are far less costly than any artificial alternative. Informed people make better decisions. [www.SafeHealthyPlayingFields.org](http://www.SafeHealthyPlayingFields.org)

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<sup>4</sup> Memo to Montgomery County Council Education Committee, January 25, 2013, pg. 5.

[http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/agenda/cm/2013/130128/20130128\\_ED2.pdf](http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/agenda/cm/2013/130128/20130128_ED2.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid pp. 5-6.