



Congresswoman
Rosa L. DeLauro

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Adriana Surfas
(202) 225-3661

DeLauro Takes CPSC to Task on Findings in Hastily Compiled and Flawed Report

Washington , D.C. – Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro (CT-3) sent a letter to Nancy A. Nord, acting chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, questioning the agency’s recently issued report on lead in synthetic turf fields and pressing for a thorough investigation. While the agency declared the fields safe, its conclusions, which were issued so hastily that even the synthetic turf industry was surprised at how quickly they were compiled, appear to be based on flawed methodology and less than sound science.

“It is my understanding that the methodology used in the CPSC study may have been flawed. As such, the report’s conclusion may have been premature, providing less than adequate rationale to conclude that children are safe from exposure to lead when playing on these fields, or that the fields are safe overall, given the numerous other chemicals that may be found in synthetic turf and the crumb rubber of which it is largely composed,” DeLauro writes in the letter. “Clearly, additional study is needed before synthetic turf fields can definitively be declared safe.”

Below is the text of the letter.

August 7, 2008

Nancy A. Nord, Acting Chairman
Consumer Product Safety Commission
U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
4330 East West Highway
Bethesda , MD 20814

Dear Chairman Nord:

I am writing to express my deep concerns about the report on lead in synthetic turf fields recently issued by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). It is my understanding that the methodology used in the CPSC study may have been flawed. As such, the report’s conclusion may have been premature, providing less than adequate rationale to conclude that children are safe from exposure to lead when playing

on these fields, or that the fields are safe overall, given the numerous other chemicals that may be found in synthetic turf and the crumb rubber of which it is largely composed.

The CPSC report itself notes that “this assessment is subject to a number of limitations.” Indeed, I am concerned about the following apparent flaws in the study and unresolved issues regarding the health and safety effects of synthetic turf fields:

- All ten of the samples of green synthetic grass that were tested (Table 1, Appendix A) appear to have been taken from four fields manufactured by the same firm (Firm 1). Only the yellow stripes from two other firms (Firms 2 and 3) were tested. There are approximately 3500 synthetic fields currently in use nationally, and 800 additional fields installed each year at high schools, universities, stadiums, and public parks. Even if the other nine non-tested samples are taken into account, it seems questionable for the CPSC to characterize to the American people that *all* synthetic turf fields in the country are safe.
- Upon close examination, Table 1 in Appendix A contains gaps and unexplained variability in the data presented. For example, for the third entry for "Firm 1, Green; new, 2008" there are no data entered for subsample 3 under the heading "Lead content (%)." Also in Table 1, there appears to be far more variation for the "Wipe Sampling Result (microgram)" than in the "Lead content (%)". Are there scientific justifications for these data gaps and variability?
- The CPSC study was titled ‘CPSC Staff Analysis and Assessment of Synthetic Turf “Grass Blades”’. However, another key concern regarding the safety of synthetic turf is the recycled tire rubber (“crumb rubber”) used in the fields. It is my understanding that a number of chemicals in addition to lead have been found in the crumb rubber, including benzothiazole (a skin and eye irritant), butylated hydroxyanisole (a carcinogen), n-hexadecane (a severe irritant), 4-(t-octyl) phenol (an irritant), phthalates (endocrine and reproductive toxicant, suspected developmental toxicant), and other chemicals.
- The CPSC press release acknowledged that “staff recognizes that some conditions such as age, weathering, exposure to sunlight, and wear and tear might change the amount of lead that could be released from the turf. As turf is used during athletics or play and exposed over time to sunlight, heat and other weather conditions, the surface of the turf may start to become worn and small particles of the lead-containing synthetic grass fibers might be released.” According to the report, the oldest field tested (installed in 1999) was associated with the highest estimated daily ingestion of lead. It is important to determine whether this result is due to aging of the field, differences in the way turf fields were manufactured between the older and newer samples, or other reasons.
- The potential health effects of the chemicals in synthetic turf must also be weighed along with other potential health risks, such as the risk of an overheated playing field and increased risk of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infections.

For these reasons, I believe that the study did not adequately support the title of the CPSC press release of July 30, 2008: "CPSC Staff Finds Synthetic Turf Fields OK to Install, OK to Play On." Given the numerous unresolved issues relating to the health and safety of synthetic turf, and the limitations described in CPSC's own study, the CPSC should have proceeded with more caution before issuing the message that synthetic turf fields are "OK to Install, OK to Play On." I would appreciate a response from you as to how CPSC decided to issue this message despite the limitations of the synthetic turf study and the fact that synthetic turf may pose a number of health risks in addition to lead exposure.

Chairman Nord, I am sure you would agree that it is the responsibility of the CPSC to conduct trustworthy studies and provide accurate information on product safety to the American public. Clearly, additional study is needed before synthetic turf fields can definitively be declared safe. Parents, schools, parks and recreation departments, and others need accurate answers about the safety and health effects of these fields to make the best possible decisions about where children and others are playing. Given the severe effects of both childhood and adult obesity on the health of Americans, the need for timely, trustworthy information on synthetic turf is especially important. I urge CPSC to continue to look into *all* the potential health effects of synthetic turf fields. I also understand that CPSC is asking that voluntary standards be developed for synthetic turf, and I would urge that potential toxins in addition to lead be included in these standards.

Thank you for your attention to this important health matter. Please contact me with any questions or concerns, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

Cc: Commissioner Thomas Moore

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