

Calls Continue To Remove Crumb Rubber At Niles Rec Center

By *Tom Wessell* on April 17, 2019

(Ed. Note: The following is an open letter to Niles village officials.)

It has been over a year since CBS 2 News ran three stories about your decision to use a crumb rubber infill for the Joe LoVerde Recreational Center in Niles. To date, neither the EPA or CDC, or any other neutral third-party regulatory entity for that matter has completed a study definitively proving crumb rubber in-fill is safe for children to play on.

The fact is, crumb rubber and EPDM for that matter, does contain cancer-causing carcinogens and over time when the rubber breaks down the dust particles contain carbon black which is known to be harmful to children if inhaled. Despite this fact, you justified your decision for using crumb rubber by claiming crumb rubber is in fact safe because: 1) Everyone else is using it, therefore it must be safe (keep in mind this project was not competitively bid and Field Turf has a virtual monopoly in the Chicago suburban area). 2) Field Turf says it is safe and

therefore it must be so by pointing to numerous studies funded by the Synthetic Turf Council or the Rubber Recycling Industry that erroneously claim crumb rubber is safe. 3) “Expert” testimony from “experts” employed or funded by the Synthetic Turf Council and the Rubber Recycling Industry. 4) Ruling out any other in-fill alternative by claiming either it has not been proven safe or it is prohibitively expensive (interesting given the fact you never really tested the market place to begin with). Furthermore, as if to thumb your nose at actually providing some sort of notification to parents, you post a dryly sarcastic “warning” in the smallest font you can informing parents about possible risks associated with small children playing on your field.

Over the past couple of years, some communities have banned crumb rubber in-fill while others have embraced the use of crumb rubber infill. Field Turf, the Synthetic Turf Council, and the Rubber Recycling Industry have spent million of dollars “protecting their turf” community by community. Most of the time they win because they are better organized and better funded. Parents who oppose the use of crumb rubber are often brushed aside as if their concerns are trivial and are often out overwhelmed by the uninformed government bureaucrats who are aligned with Field Turf and their lobbying team. The fact that Field Turf has a monopoly in the Chicagoland suburbs should raise questions alone.

It is my hope you will change your mind and remove the crumb rubber in-fill from the LoVerde Recreational Center. It will not

cost that much to remove it and there are, despite what you think, alternatives (see new Texas Rangers baseball stadium or Miami Dolphins indoor training facility) to crumb rubber infill. My biggest fear is that you will ignore his email and someday some unlucky child gets very sick because of their exposure to the carbon black dust contained in your field. Think about that the next time you enjoy food and drinks at the Howard Street Inn on Field Turf's dime.

Teve Demotte

Niles