

Report of LPAC Artificial Ground Coverings Task Force Meeting

Margate Park Field House

Monday, March 15, 2010 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Attendees: Joan Levin, Becky Rossof and Basia Rudy, representative of Perfect Turf

<http://www.perfectturfinc.com/>

This meeting was held as a follow-up to our report at the February LPAC meeting. Two representatives from Perfect Turf attended that meeting and volunteered to share their knowledge with our group. Prior to the meeting Ms. Rudy emailed two documents: one describing the recommended maintenance program for artificial turf and the other documenting the total lead content of their artificial turf in laboratory testing. She also provided us with copies of the New York City Fact Sheet on Artificial Turf Fields. (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/eode/eode-turf.shtml>)

Ms. Rudy engaged in discussion about the products of Perfect Turf as well as the general issues of artificial turf and their maintenance. She responded to our questions and supplied considerable information about the industry. She also indicated that she would be sending some additional information by email to help us understand the RFP specifications. Perfect Turf does maintenance of artificial turf fields and also installs sports and landscape artificial turf. They work with 4 manufacturers in the US and work with Act Global Sports (<http://www.actglobalsports.com/>) to sell, install and maintain sports fields. Perfect Turf has installed 2 indoor sports fields in Illinois and one indoor baseball facility in Crown Point, IN.

Composition of artificial turf and possible toxins:

Generally the manufacturer pays for an independent lab to test and verify the lead content of their products. Ms. Rudy said she will try to send us results of a more complete testing of the composition of their products as an example.

There is an alternative to crumb rubber in-fill. It is called TPE, (thermoplastic elastomers, a new material of thermoplastic rubber granules, and can be made in a lighter color which reduces the high temperatures on crumb-rubber fields. But it is more expensive than a crumb-rubber infill. After the meeting Ms. Rudy emailed us several documents about the performance and laboratory tests of these TPE products.

Maintenance of artificial turf fields:

General recommendations:

Grooming with a power broom (looks something like a steam roller, powered by electric cord). Cost of the power broom is about \$3,000. A field should be groomed once a week during usage and about 3-4 hours of time will be needed to groom a field. The grooming does not remove debris, but distributes the crumb rubber evenly over the field refilling holes caused by shifting and displaced bits of rubber. If this grooming is not done, the field will develop “pot holes” and increase risks of injuries.

Field Turf now includes a three-year maintenance contract as part of their bid and they include a power broom with the installation of their product.

Additionally a deep cleaning, i.e. removing dust and debris, done with a motorized piece of equipment about the size of a small tractor, should be done at least twice a season. In this process the rubber crumb is actually picked up, separated from debris, and then re-deposited back onto the turf blades. Perfect Turf does maintenance contracts for such cleaning. "The industry-leading maintenance equipment is manufactured by SMG of Germany. This equipment allows Perfect Turf maintenance specialists to quickly and cost-effectively clean, de-compact and level your all-rubber or rubber/sand synthetic turf athletic fields. This type of maintenance helps prolong the life of the field, maintains a more consistent and safer surface, and is typically required by the manufacturer's warranty." The chemical cleaners involved in this process could be eco-friendly. From time to time additional rubber must be deposited onto the turf to replace rubber that gets scattered and lost.

Pet grass is the only turf for which they recommend using a microbial spray. The spray should prevent the build up of odor-causing bacteria.

Installation:

A sports field is usually installed over a stone or gravel base. The base is most important to maintain a level or a slight pitch to the field. For playgrounds, the landscape turf is installed over a 3" foam pad to meet specification of cushioning a fall from an 8' drop. If the potential fall is greater than an 8' drop then a synthetic turf with a crumb rubber infill would be installed over the foam padding. The decision for a playground installation would be made based on the potential fall height, not on safety concerns of crumb rubber.

Drainage:

Should drain and be ready for play with an hour or two after a rain if the installation has been done properly. Drainage holes should be placed at least every 4". The drainage of a field is depend on the quality of the base and the underwork.

She mentioned that Schaumburg Park District (done by Sportexe) and Lake Forest High School (Perfect Turf does yearly maintenance) have outdoor artificial sports fields and suggested that we ask them about maintenance and wear issues.

Bidding on installations:

Often request for proposals include specifications that correlate directly with Field Turf products. Other vendors must then show that their product is equal to the Field Turf product. Ms. Rudy will send us sample bid specifications for a sports field for Marshall Metro, a CPS high school.

Other companies dealing with artificial turf:

Field Turf – probably the leader in the US market <http://www.fieldturf.com/>

Sportexe –suppliers and installers <http://www.sportexe.com/>

Chicago Dream Grass – landscape and golf facilities, installers <http://www.chicagodreamgrass.com/>

Disposal:

At the end of the useful life, for a fee the manufacture will pick up the turf, cut off the blades and recycle them in the manufacture of blades for a new turf. The crumb rubber is also taken back by the manufacturer for re-use. However the backing material is not recyclable. Often old artificial turf is resold for use in yards or smaller fields. Pet grass is a true green product and can be eco-friendly.