

Legal Action Launched on Lead in Artificial Turf

For Immediate Release

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Lead threats from synthetic turf are not just from sport fields – testing finds lead in artificial grass from Home Depot, Lowe's, Ace Hardware, OSH and residential installers.

Oakland, CA- Independent testing commissioned by the Center for Environmental Health (CEH) has found high levels of lead in artificial turf, including turf and indoor/outdoor grass carpet purchased from Home Depot, Orchard Supply Hardware (OSH), Ace Hardware and Lowe's, as well as from carpet retailers, online marketers, Bay Area turf installers, and from turf obtained from a Bay Area elementary school. A test result on one sample showed that a single wipe of a child's hand on the turf could, if the child then wiped her hand on her mouth, suffer a lead exposure in violation of California law.

"Parents see their kids playing on artificial turf and they expect the turf to be safe," said Michael Green, Executive Director of CEH. "But we found that artificial grass and turf can pose a real health threat to children. You may not have to mow it or water it, but unfortunately our findings show that you do have to test it for lead."

Recent reports have found high lead levels in turf on artificial turf playing fields, but the CEH testing shows that artificial grass used by residential installers and sold to do-it-yourselfers can also be a health threat. In addition to the home improvement retailers, the CEH testing found lead in indoor/outdoor grass carpets made by Shaw Floors and Atlas Floor Coverings; and artificial grass obtained from residential installers and dealers in turf for do-it-yourself installation, including AstroLawn and SynLawn (divisions of AstroTurf, a subsidiary of Crystal Products), U.S. Turf, NewGrass, ProGreen International, Best Turf for Less, Turf Headquarters, Forever Lawn, and Synthetic Turf International.

CEH initiated legal action against the retailers and synthetic turf companies under California's Proposition 65 law today. The nonprofit is calling for turf makers to reformulate their products to eliminate the lead risk to children. CEH is recommending that parents and schools be sure that children wash their hands thoroughly after playing on artificial turf fields. The nonprofit is also announcing that parents, schools or others with artificial turf fields can send samples of turf for free lead testing to the nonprofit's Oakland office.

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released a warning about potential lead exposures from turf, stating that "As the turf ages and weathers, lead is released in dust that could then be ingested or inhaled, and the risk for harmful exposure increases." One of the turf samples CEH found with high levels of accessible lead was obtained from the yard of a Bay Area elementary school that had the turf installed (3) years ago.

Children playing on artificial grass can be exposed when lead from turf wipes off onto their hands (from hand-to-mouth behaviors), and young children may be more at risk since they are more likely to swallow turf material. Children can also be exposed when turf degrades in the sun and releases lead-tainted dust. In the 1990's, the CPSC announced recalls of certain vinyl mini-blinds due to the potential for lead poisoning from dust on the blinds.

Lead is a neurotoxin that can cause learning disorders, brain and nerve damage, hearing problems, stunted growth, and digestive problems. Scientists are increasingly concerned that there is no safe level of lead exposure, especially for young children.

The testing commissioned by CEH analyzed total lead concentration in turf and also used a standard wipe test to ascertain the amount of accessible lead from contact with the turf. The tests found high levels of lead in both nylon and polyethylene turf samples.

In New Jersey, several turf fields have been closed after high lead levels were found. The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) recently tested artificial turf and dust from turf fields and found that lead in turf can become accessible and pose a health hazard when digested. In a letter to CPSC, the NJ agency stated that its testing showed that "lead dissolves from turf fibers and the turf field dust under stomach acid conditions, and is available to be absorbed through the small intestine."

According to the synthetic turf industry, the NJ study confirmed the safety of turf. But NJDHSS found otherwise, stating that for children exposed to lead from artificial turf, "the potential for lead poisoning to occur is plausible." The agency also called for alternatives to the use of lead in the manufacture of synthetic turf.

In May, the California Senate passed a bill sponsored by Senator Abel Maldonado (R-Santa Maria) calling for a state study investigating the health and environmental impacts of natural versus synthetic turf fields. The bill, SB 1277, now goes to the Assembly.

To see the full CEH report on artificial turf, including a list of products with high lead levels, please click [here](#). Consumers with questions about sending samples for lead testing to CEH can call 510-594-9864.

The CDC statement is available at

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/artificialturf.htm>

The NJDHSS press release and more information is available at

http://nj.gov/cgi-bin/dhss/njnewsline/view_article.pl?id=3190

Information on SB 1277 is available at http://info.sen.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=sb_1277&sess=CUR&house=B&site

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