



Artificial Athletic Turf Fields

Frequently Asked Questions

How many artificial turf fields are in the District?

The District maintains and operates 52 artificial athletic turf fields with an infill material composed mostly of sand and crumb rubber. The fields vary in age from one year old to more than 15 years old.

Does the District currently have a moratorium on crumb tire rubber field materials?

Yes, the District has not installed any artificial turf fields with crumb rubber since 2016. While the District maintains a number of crumb rubber athletic fields, the infill used for repairs or replacement fields does not use tire rubber.

What is a GMAX test?

GMAX testing is the standard method developed for testing and determining the shock attenuation of artificial and natural turf athletic fields. Impact testing of synthetic turf is important as GMAX values correlate to the safety of the playing surface. Higher GMAX values indicate harder playing surfaces, leading to higher probability of concussions and other injuries from users or players impacting the surface. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International's standard, the most commonly used standard, establishes a GMAX value of 200 as the maximum allowable limit.

How often are fields maintained and tested?

The 52 artificial fields in the District are maintained and tested by a third party vendor (FieldTurf). This vendor performs a GMAX test for

each field once annually. This vendor also performs maintenance on the fields which includes but is not limited to; surface brushing, surface aerating, surface raking, surface sweeping, complete inspection (line markings, seams, and high-traffic areas) and infill top dressing.

How many fields were out of compliance with GMAX testing?

One field at Janney Elementary School tested out of compliance during two rounds of GMAX tests by two different vendors. Six DC Public Schools (DCPS) elementary school fields received conflicting GMAX test results, and will undergo another round of testing in the coming weeks with analysis to follow. Four fields at DCPS and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) facilities are currently undergoing repairs, which will be complete by August 23.

How does a field not meet compliance with GMAX testing?

Each field receives monthly maintenance in accordance with the field manufacturer's recommendations but over the course of time a field surface gets harder and repairs and replacements are necessary. An out of compliance result is not activity specific, so limiting activities on the field is paramount for safety.

How will the District address out of compliance fields?

One field at Janney Elementary School tested out of compliance with two rounds of GMAX tests. The field is restricted to limited use (contact sports are prohibited), and then closed for replacement.

Six other fields received conflicting GMAX test results, and will undergo another round of testing in the coming weeks with analysis to follow. Out of an abundance of caution, those six fields will be restricted to limited use until analysis is complete.

What is the replacement material of the field at Janney Elementary School?

The field is being replaced with another synthetic surface compliant with the District's moratorium on crumb rubber.

What is the replacement schedule for a field that requires replacement?

The Janney Elementary School field will be replaced by October 1 or sooner in coordination with DCPS. Generally a field replacement takes four to six weeks.

Did the testing include artificial playground surfaces?

Currently the District does not test any playground surfaces, only artificial athletic turf fields.

What is the District's policy on artificial athletic turf fields?

Currently the District does not have a policy on artificial athletic turf fields. The Department of General Services, DCPS, and DPR will meet with stakeholders this fall and winter to create formal policy to ensure safe field use. Whenever possible, field repairs and replacements will be scheduled for minimal impact on school and community activities.

For more information, please contact the DGS Communications Department at dgsprojects@dc.gov

[