

Artificial Turf FAQ's November 2018

How many artificial turf fields are in the District?

The District maintains and operates 82 natural grass fields, 52 artificial turf fields, and 8 artificial turf play areas. These include fields at DC Public School (DCPS) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) facilities. DGS is committed to ensuring the safety of all District residents and users of these fields.

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

Yes while reports and studies have yet to provide conclusive evidence of harmful effects, the DC Council implemented a moratorium on the use of crumb tire rubber materials to eliminate concerns raised by residents. The District has not installed any artificial turf fields with crumb tire 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 recycled tire crumb rubber. DGS has ceased use of this material upon the adoption of the moratorium.

What is a GMAX test?

Impact testing, commonly referred to as 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. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International's standard F1936-10, the most commonly used standard, establishes a GMAX value of 200 for the maximum allowable limit for safety. Any higher GMAX values indicate harder playing surfaces, leading to a higher probability of concussions and other injuries.

How often are fields maintained and tested?

At a minimum, fields are tested once per year, during a two week span following the end of the regular school year. For FY 19, the testing dates are June 17th through June 28th.

How many fields were out of compliance with GMAX testing?

In August 2018, 15 fields failed the GMAX test. Safety signage was posted, the fields were taken out of service and all were repaired within four days. The affected fields were Bundy Park Field, Jelleff Recreation Center, Emery Recreation Center, Deanwood Recreation Center, Palisades Recreation Center, Joseph Cole Recreation Center, Park View Recreation Center, Shepherd Soccer Field, Upshur Recreation Center, Deal Middle School, Horace Mann Elementary School, McKinley Tech High School, Stanton Elementary School, Tubman Elementary School and Turner Elementary School.

How will the District address out of compliance fields?

Fields that fail the GMAX test are closed immediately. The notification process then begins where stakeholders are given information concerning the closure and the anticipated date of completion of repairs. These repairs can be completed in as little as a few hours, to several days, depending upon the severity of repair and availability of materials. Once repairs have been made, the areas are re-tested. If a passing GMAX score is obtained, the field will immediately become available for use.

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, DPR, the Office of the City Administrator (OCA), the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), and the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) have formed the Interagency Working Group on Artificial Turf and Playgrounds (the Working Group). The mission of the Working group is to create a 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