

Date: October 29, 2008

To: Honorable Minneapolis City Council Member Scott Benson
From: Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC)
RE: Recommendation on Use of Crumb Rubber Applications

With the assistance of local environmental health and landscape architect professionals, PHAC members reviewed four applications of rubber products utilized within Minneapolis parks and playgrounds. It is important to note that these products do not have the same origin, same formulation (i.e. solid form, chipped, painted, etc.), nor exposure to hazards.

They include:

- Rubber chips
- Poured in place recycled crumb rubber
- Rubber molded tiles/rubber mats
- Crumb rubber/Field Turf product

Potential health and safety considerations to consider/explore specific to each product include:

- heat stress
- injury
- infection
- latex allergy
- chemical exposure (indoor vs. outdoor use)

After a series of discussions, PHAC members have developed three key recommendations regarding future use of these rubber products in Minneapolis:

- 1) PHAC recommends monitoring related research and studies as they become available.
- 2) PHAC recommends application of the **precautionary principle**¹ before utilizing additional rubber product in Minneapolis parks and playgrounds.
 - The precautionary principle is a tool for policy- and decision-making designed to ensure that people or entities bear political responsibility for taking action to prevent damage to health and ecosystems in the face of uncertain scientific information about health and ecosystem risks.
 - Application of the precautionary principle is especially appropriate for the protection of children's health because:
 - the science underlying the impacts of environmental stressors on children (from the stage of the fetus to the age of 18) is more complex, less researched and less understood than that of such impacts on adults;
 - the likelihood of serious harm to children from such impacts can be greater than for adults because of their different and changing stages of biological development, their behavior and their greater exposure in relation to body weight;
 - children are involuntarily exposed to a greater proportion of the risks caused by society's activities than adults, yet they have less power to avoid them;
 - the risks and the benefits of avoided risks have more time to impact on children and society than on adults;
- 3) PHAC recommends entities considering the use of rubber products in parks and playgrounds seek/investigate alternative products which may be safer for children (i.e. flexsand, corn husk, cork, etc.)

¹ Dealing with uncertainty – how can the precautionary principle help protect the future of our children? World Health Organization Europe. Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. Budapest, Hungary, June 2004.