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Association Releases Updated Information Regarding Use of Recycled Rubber on Playgrounds

HARRISBURG – In January 2010, the International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) released a position statement on investigations it conducted from various studies and reports on the use of recycled rubber on playgrounds. That statement indicated that IPEMA would continue to review information on the use of recycled rubber and would update its position, as needed, to follow the recommendations of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) as it relates to the use of this product on playgrounds.

Based on the new and original information available in the studies and research conducted and found below, IPEMA sees no need to change its original position statement. Two new studies confirmed the original studies, as follows:

A study was conducted by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, The University of Connecticut Health Center, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and the CT Department of Environmental Protection and released July 30, 2010. The study was peer reviewed by the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, as well. This study found there was no elevated health risk in the use of crumb rubber. For more information and to view the entire study, please visit www.ct.gov/dep/artificialturf

The Public Health Madison and Dane County in Wisconsin conducted a review of available literature to evaluate the potential threat to human health and environmental quality from the application of crumb and/or shredded rubber materials to local playgrounds and athletic fields. The results of this review were released on November 15, 2011 and concluded that “adverse impacts to human health and/or environmental quality from the use of this material in playgrounds and athletic fields are unlikely and should be considered a viable option to improve recreations resources.” The report can be found by visiting www.publichealthmdc.com

(more)
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) studied air and surface samples at four fields and playgrounds that use recycled tires – the same material that cushions the ground under the Obama family’s play set at the White House. The limited study, conducted in August through October 2008, found that the concentrations of materials that made up tire crumb were below levels considered harmful. In addition, the overall study protocol and many of the methods were found to be appropriate and could be implemented in the field.

The EPA posted a document to its website on December 3, 2009 entitled “The Use of Recycled Tire Materials on Playgrounds & Artificial Turf Fields”. (The document can be found at http://www.epa.gov/nerl/features/tire_crumbs.html. This document reiterates the information found in the original report and indicates that a meeting was planned for spring 2010 to share more information and discuss whether additional research was needed. We are not aware of the results of that meeting, nor are they posted on the EPA’s website.

In January 2007, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment of the California Environmental Protection Agency tested skin sensitization by playground surfaces made of recycled tires and found no sensitization observed suggesting that these surfaces would not cause skin sensitization in children, nor would they be expected to elicit skin reaction in children already sensitized to latex. (Study dated January 2007 can be viewed at: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/Tires/62206013.pdf)

ChemRisk, Inc. in Pittsburgh conducted a review of exposure to recycled tire rubber found on playgrounds and synthetic turf fields. They concluded that no adverse human health or ecological health effects are likely to result from these beneficial reuses of tire materials. (Study dated July 17, 2008. Detailed information and more studies can be found at http://www.syntheticturfcouncil.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=91)

A comprehensive review of the available literature on the potential health effects of crumb rubber infill from synthetic turf fields was conducted by TRC on behalf of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This review demonstrated that the major health concern of these fields is related to heat. Eleven different risk assessments applied various available concentrations of COPCs and none identified an increased risk for human health effects as a result of ingestion, dermal or inhalation exposure to crumb rubber. (Study dated May 2008 can be reviewed by visiting www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/eode/turf_report_05-08.pdf)

IPEMA does not dictate or recommend whether its members use recycled rubber in their products. It is the choice of the individual member. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) determines and guides the safety issues facing the playground equipment industry.
Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has endorsed the use of recycled rubber to cushion the surfaces of children’s playgrounds. For more information, visit http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/tools/cpg/products/playgrnd.htm.

IPEMA encourages its members to follow the guidelines of the CPSC. IPEMA will respond appropriately if the CPSC or EPA identifies recycled tire rubber as a play hazard. The CPSC, the Centers for Disease Control and the EPA recommend that young children wash their hands frequently after playing outside and always before they eat. IPEMA also recommends these practices. IPEMA is always interested in reviewing new safety information, including any independent, third party, scientific studies concerning the use of recycled tires.

IPEMA provides a voluntary third-party product certification to ASTM safety standards in the U.S. and Canada for playground products, including surfacing materials. Those interested in learning more about play equipment and surfacing safety are encouraged to visit www.ipema.org.

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