

Releases & Statements

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Public Advocate Gotbaum Calls for Independent Testing of Pellets Used in City Parks

-Health risks to New Yorkers playing on synthetic turf remains unknown -

MANHATTAN – Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum today called for immediate, independent testing of rubber pellets that may pose serious health risks to New Yorkers. The rubber pellets, used to fill in synthetic turf in more than 70 athletic fields throughout the City, are made from recycled tires that contain high levels of cancer-causing chemicals. The health risks to families and kids playing on the turf remain unknown.

Public Advocate Gotbaum was joined by CUNY Professor William Crain and representatives from New York Lawyers for the Public Interest to call on the Parks Department to allow an independent study of the health impacts of the pellets before the City expands their use to additional fields.

Public Advocate Gotbaum said, "Families and children play in City parks every day – and they shouldn't be placed in danger. We know these pellets contain toxic agents, but we don't know if these hazardous agents will hurt families or children. That's why the City should allow an exhaustive, independent study to help us identify possible health risks and protect New Yorkers."

In 2006, researchers at Rutgers University studied the pellets and found levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons at levels well above those set for soil by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. However, the study did not determine if the chemicals are absorbed into the body. The Parks Department has denied requests for further tests.

Professor William Crain said, "It is an important public health issue that we learn how these chemicals in synthetic turf might affect children or athletes. The Parks Department should be encouraging our research, not putting obstacles in our way."

The Parks Department uses the rubber pellet infill on the surface of the turf to make it feel more natural. As a result, the pellets come in near-constant contact with people using the fields.

Gavin Kearney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest said, "New Yorkers deserve safe parks. Where legitimate health concerns are raised, the Parks Department should support efforts to address those concerns and not stone wall the process."

Christian DiPalermo, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks, said, "Questions remain, and the City should make every effort to examine the turf issue in a transparent way to ensure the safety of all New Yorkers and the best use of public dollars."

Professor Crain and researchers at Rutgers University have already secured funding to complete an independent study of the pellets. However, the funding is predicated on Parks Department authorization. Public Advocate Gotbaum said that the City should allow Rutgers University or another independent organization to analyze the health impact of these pellets.