

PROTECT OUR PARKS, INC.

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TOXIC ARTIFICIAL TURF A HAZARD TO LATIN SCHOOL CHILDREN AND THE PUBLIC ALLEGES LATEST LAWSUIT FILED BY PROTECT OUR PARKS

The Chicago Park District and Latin School have been sued again by Protect Our Parks, POP, the neighborhood park watchdog organization fighting construction of the Latin School artificial turf soccer field in the formerly open, grassy meadow of South Field Lincoln Park at the foot of the bridge crossing Lake Shore Drive to North Avenue Beach.

The new complaint alleges that the artificial turf and scrap tire crumb rubber infill contain dangerous lead and other harmful chemicals that endanger the health and safety of young children exposed to it on a regular basis.

The complaint further alleges that the designated site immediately borders the heavily traveled lanes of Lake Shore Drive traffic, which further exposes children to the cumulative toxic effect of constantly breathing exhaust fumes from automobiles as well as polluted contaminants from factories carried by prevailing winds and deposited on the lakefront park.

The matter has come to the attention of the Great Lakes Centers for Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health, located at the University of Illinois, Chicago, which is a local affiliate of the US Center for Disease Control which has issued the following statement: "We advise that the City of Chicago should conduct an assessment of the environmental health risks of the artificial turf field in Lincoln Park before continuing with its installation. We believe that the data collected by multiple researchers and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention demonstrate the need to conduct such a risk assessment, Until a risk assessment is conducted we strongly urge park planners to stick with regular grass fields instead of installing a product that may harbor bacteria, function as a heat sink and may contain chemicals which are hazardous to children".

POP alleges that the defendants have totally ignored the recent safety warning from U.S. Center for Disease Control that cautioned persons exposed to existing artificial turf fields not eat or drink anything on the field, shower and scrub vigorously after play, turn their clothes inside out and launder separately from other clothing, and leave their shoes out of doors, all to limit the exposure to the contaminants in the dust emitted from the turf fields.

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POP alleges that the Park District and Latin School have disregarded all warnings and made no effort to conduct independent tests of either the soil, ambient air, or the turf product, before picking the site solely for its convenience to the Latin School, located at the edge of the park, which is used by Latin as a virtually private playfield.

The suit alleges that the installation of this artificial turf product is in violation of the Chicago Lead Bearing Substances Ordinance, and asks for an immediate Injunction preventing its installation.

Earlier this month the state of California filed suit against the three leading manufacturers of artificial turf, including FieldTurf, the company contracted to install its product in south Lincoln Park. Artificial Turf is also currently under attack by the Attorney General of Connecticut and prominent physicians in New York and New Jersey.

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