

Information Report

Title: Rubberized Playground Surfacing

Report Number: Parks & Facilities-2024-13

Director: Community Services

Manager: Manager.

Meeting Date:

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Executive Summary:

Compacted rubberized surfacing at playgrounds is the one of the safest and most durable products to ensure safety at playgrounds.

Varying degrees of products provides many options for improving playground performance.

Context and Background Information:

As part of the 2024 budget deliberations, Council directed Staff to present a report on concerns regarding rubberized surfacing in playgrounds. Staff have reviewed the varying materials and different applications that could be considered for surfacing.

There are thousands of playgrounds dotted throughout Canada with rubberized surfacing. Rubberized surfacing is typically recycled plastics and tires. Although there were concerns surfacing over 5 years ago in the United States over the use of recycled tires in the product, there is not further reports or concerns, except that rubber that breaks off due to substandard installation.

A good installation for rubberized surfacing should last at least 15 years. However, the lifespan can vary based on several factors such as the quality of the installation, the level of maintenance, and the choice of rubber granules of binder used.

Loose-fill material is typically installed by hand to create a level area over the entire playground. Rubber mulch engineered wood fiber (EWF), playground sand, pea gravel and other bulk materials are considered loose-fill material. While loose-fill material has the least expensive upfront costs and is easy to install, it also requires more frequent maintenance to stay within safety.

Loose-fill materials will compress at least 25 percent over time due to use and weathering and must be replenished to ensure the surfacing remains at the appropriate depth to adequately cushion falls. Things like shards of glass, other sharp objects or animal waste can get buried in the loose material posing a potential hazard requiring the material to be replenished and/or replaced from time to time.

Concerns have been raised internationally about a shredded rubberized product, similar to EWF, that is loose and can be picked up and placed in one's mouth.

Rubber surfacing makes playground accessibility simple. The firmness of rubber surfacing allows children and adults of all physical ability to use the playground without impediment.

Sometimes called "wet pour rubber flooring", "rubberized playground surfacing", "safety flooring for playgrounds", or "playground base", it should be installed when a playground is being built or for an existing playground.

At Lions Park located at the Davidson Centre, a good example of a combination of rubberized surfacing and loose-fill surfacing can be seen. This is a common method used throughout similar sized playgrounds.

Consultation Overview:

Staff have consulted with Ontario based playground equipment providers for input on the potential concerns of rubberized surface products.

Origin:

Request by Council to report back on concerns regarding rubberized surfacing.

Attachments: None

Prepared by: Jayne K. Jagelewski, Director of Community Services

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