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Association Releases Information Regarding Use of Recycled Rubber on Playgrounds

HARRISBURG - Recently, media reports have raised questions about the use of recycled rubber on playgrounds. As a leader of the play equipment and related materials industry, the International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) investigated various studies and reports related to this issue. The investigations revealed the following facts:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently 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 new 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 details of the EPA’s study can be found at http://www.epa.gov/nerl/features/tire_crumbs.html)

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.syntheticurfCouncil.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=91>)

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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 will be monitoring the EPA 2010 meeting with federal and state agencies that will review all new study data and determine next steps.

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.