

Commonly Asked Synthetic Turf Questions:

Q: What is a synthetic turf field made of?

A: A typical synthetic turf field is a system that is made up of a carpet made of polypropylene and/or polyethylene fibers woven into a backing material. The carpet is “infilled” with rubber or a rubber/sand blend of granules. For a multi-purpose field, the rubber/sand blend is typically used. The carpet lays on top of a gravel base approximately 6” deep. Within the gravel base is a drainage system made up of porous plastic piping.

Q: What are the common reasons for providing synthetic turf?

A: Typically, there would be a combination of reasons, including –

- 1) When it is difficult for the School District to properly maintain a natural turf field as a safe, uniform and playable surface due to the amount and type of use.
- 2) If the limitations on use of the natural turf fields are preventing the District from providing as many sports offerings as they would like or need.
- 3) If, due to the drainage or other existing conditions, natural grass is very difficult to properly maintain.
- 4) If the topsoil on an existing field is poor or non-existent, the high cost of mitigating this problem can make the cost of a synthetic turf field more competitive.
- 5) If there is a need to play on the field early in the spring, late in the fall or during the winter, which a natural turf field typically will not allow.
- 6) If desired for programs for school summer programs, sports or other camps, community use, youth leagues, etc.
- 7) For revenue generation from the above programs.

Q: What is involved in synthetic turf maintenance?

A: The field requires regular raking and sweeping to clean and smooth the field. This is done with an attachment that is towed behind a tractor with tires that are appropriate for use on a turf field. This equipment is normally provided by the turf manufacturer when the field is built. Depending on the amount of use, this would be done every week or two during the playing season. If liquids need to be cleaned off of the field, a mild power wash is used. Occasionally, the infill of rubber/rubber-sand will need to be raked to remove high areas and fill low areas of the rubber mixture. Additional rubber mixture may need to be added after two to three years (bags of the mixture can be provided when the field is built).

Q: What would a typical synthetic turf warranty consist of?

A: In the past, manufacturers have typically provided an 8-year warranty for defects, fiber loss, loose seams, and other failures of the system resulting from normal wear. However, with the newer fields, the warranty period has lengthened to 10 or 12 years. It is highly recommended that the buyer require a third-party warranty for protection if the manufacturer goes out of business during the warranty period.

The State Education Department has indicated that they will not cover the full replacement of the field until after 15 years; however, within the 15 years, they will provide funding based on the prorated amount and the state aid the District receives.

Q: When will the synthetic turf need to be replaced?

A: Based on synthetic turf fields that have been installed, they typically do not need replacement until after 10 – 12 years. The life of the turf field can often be extended by replacing just the worn portions of the field, such as the goal areas.

Q: What is the replacement cost?

A: The replacement cost will depend on the specific situation and the escalation of costs. The manufacturers at this time are estimating that replacement cost of the carpet and installation, including minor modification of the base will run approximately \$6 per square foot, or \$600,000. School Districts sometimes bank the savings from maintenance, any revenue from the field, etc. in a fund that can be applied to the replacement costs when necessary.

Other questions: One of the best ways to find out about synthetic turf fields is to visit other schools and facilities in your area and talk with the Athletic Directors, Superintendents of Buildings and Grounds and other administrators to find out how their synthetic turf fields are working for them.