

# ***USGreentech***

## **WHAT'S IN YOUR TURF MATTERS®**

### **5 Reasons to NOT use crumb rubber on your next sports field.**

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If you're just thinking about crumb rubber for your next field, we're challenging you to think again. Here's our top 5 reasons why crumb rubber is not your best option:

1. It smells bad.
2. It's black and hot.
3. It's dirty.
4. Its' source can't be tracked.
5. It wasn't made for your sports field.

A one time decision to go with the lowest cost infill can create a decade of regret.

Let's create better turf systems together!



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Thankfully, synthetic turf fields evolved from the abrasive and hard nylon systems of the 1960's. However, since the rubber infill systems were introduced way back in the late 1990's not much has changed. Most of the industry is still using the same crumb rubber. We'd like to stop and ask, "Why?" What is so appealing about this material? Can we do better? Can you do better? Do our athletes deserve a better playing surface? Sure, rubber is cheap. But what else? We'll explore 5 reasons why you might want to think twice about using crumb rubber in your next sports field.

### #1 It smells bad.

There is nothing quite like the smell of fresh cut grass on a sports field. When the decision is made to replace a grass playing surface with synthetic, we not only lose this iconic smell, but we gain the pungent smell of tires. A smell that gets even stronger with the heat of summer which causes volatiles in the rubber to offgas. While the smell of something may not be at the top of anyone's mind during design of the field, it will be when you're in the stands watching a game and can't escape the smell of rubber coming from the field.



*Crumb rubber infill*

### #2. It's black and hot.

Like the original Model T, it comes in one color... black. And as your field ages, the rubber becomes more and more prominent on the field. The logos and lines become muted and the field loses that beautiful, perfectly green look. The field almost takes on a five-o'clock shadow look as the rubber starts to dominate the field.



*Overheated Athlete*

Crumb rubber retains a lot of heat. Of all the infills tested, it contributes the most to the surface temperature on the field. From coast to coast, field owners wrestle with the heat of their fields and go to extreme measures to work around it from installing irrigations systems that water plastic grass to limiting the amount and duration of practices. One thing is for certain, we aren't going to get cooler fields by installing crumb rubber.

### #3. It's dirty.

It continues to break down. Rubber's worst enemy is the sun. It dries out rubber and causes it to dry rot. When the essential oils leach out of the rubber, it becomes less resilient. (Where do those oils go?) Ever see a tire that's left out of the sun unprotected? It suffers cracks and becomes dry



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and brittle. The same thing happens to each of the rubber particles that are exposed to the sun. And as it breaks down, the rubber dust becomes airborne. This is very apparent when visiting an indoor field. The action during play stirs up the rubber and then the dust settles on everything throughout the facility. Whether the field is indoors or outdoors, the rubber dust is being inhaled by athletes and by-standers [not to mention it being carried home via your athlete's shoes.]



*Young athletes*

### **#4. Its' source can't be tracked.**

A typical football field includes about 20,000 ground-up car tires from a wide range of manufacturers, with large variation in regulations, including foreign tire manufacturing. If there are ingredients in any of those tires that you don't like, you won't be able to pick and choose what goes in and what does not.

### **#5. It wasn't made for your sports field.**

It might feel good to take a waste product from one industry and delay its trip to the landfill by using it in your sports field. But it's much more



*Car Tire*

complicated. There is a significant amount of ingredients that go into making a car tire last for 90,000 miles while going 70mph down the highway. Those aren't the ingredients you would choose if making an infill for synthetic turf. And there can be complicated decisions when replacing your field. Can it go to your landfill? Can you dispose of it easily? Are you now responsible for throwing away what the tire industry could not?

When you take a step back and think about using ground up car tires in your sports field you must admit that besides being cheap, crumb rubber doesn't have a lot of appealing qualities. We encourage you to do better by your athletes and your community. It reminds me of the quote... "The Bitterness of low quality is remembered long after the sweetness of low price has faded from memory." Or put in another way, I would rather justify the premium once then defend my decision for the next 10 years.

**Let's create better turf systems together!**