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M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George’s County Provides Update on Playground Lead Testing

RIVERDALE, MD – The Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George’s County, part of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, recently conducted specialized testing to assess lead levels in rubberized play surfaces. Fifty-four of the Department’s playgrounds contain Poured-in-Place (PIP) rubber surfacing to enhance accessibility while reducing the likelihood of serious injuries from falls.

While there are no lead standards for rubberized play surfacing, the Department elected to use the most stringent criteria, established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for lead in bare soil in children's play areas for evaluation. Surface testing at the 54 playgrounds indicated that the EPA standards were met, except for the playground at Riverdale Park School in The Town of Riverdale Park, Maryland. The conclusion of the testing showed levels of lead above the EPA standards within rubber surfacing at the Riverdale Park School, resulting in the immediate closure of the playground to the public.

“The Department remains committed to providing transparent information to the community,” states Bill Tyler, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation. “We continue to work to ensure that all of our parks and recreation spaces are safe for residents and visitors.”

The firm of Air, Land and Water Engineering, Inc. (ALWE)* was contracted to perform lead testing and analysis of the rubberized play surface in each of the 54 Department-owned playgrounds in Prince George’s County. The EPA standard sets a limit of 400 parts per million (ppm) (or 0.04%). ALWE performed several tests to collect the necessary samples: lead dust wipes (surface), bulk samples (base), and colored rubberized samples (top layer).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The playground at Riverdale Park School was immediately closed once it was determined that its surface did not meet EPA standards. The Department posted signage on the entrance gate to announce the closure. Repairs to the playground are currently in progress and all rubber surfaces will be removed and replaced with Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF): a processed wood product (approx. 2" length max.) that is ground to a fibrous consistency, free of hazardous elements, and engineered specifically for playgrounds. Upon completion of the renovations, retesting will be conducted prior to reopening to ensure compliance.

The Department is committed to providing a safe play environment for Prince George's County families and visitors. The Department is updating its playground surfacing standards and decision making to ensure that current and future playgrounds meet existing environmental site conditions and programmatic needs.

*ALWE environmental consultants are licensed in Maryland as Lead Inspector Technicians and Licensed in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. as Lead Risk Assessors.

About the Department

The M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation delivers an award-winning park system in Prince George's County through progressive, innovative leadership and a commitment to the community and the environment. For more on the Department of Parks and Recreation, visit www.pgparks.com and stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [PhotoShelter](#), and [Instagram](#). The Department of Parks and Recreation encourages and supports the participation of individuals with disabilities in all programs and services. Register at least a minimum of two weeks in advance of the program start date to request and receive a disability accommodation.

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