



LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY BULLETIN

TITLE: POLICY FOR SELECTION, USAGE, AND
MAINTENANCE OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS

NUMBER: BUL-6847.0

ISSUER: Mark Hovatter, Chief Facilities Executive
Facilities Services Division

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BACKGROUND: The Los Angeles Unified School District (District), in order to provide quality playfields for students, must select the most appropriate type of field based upon expected use. The two available options are natural grass and synthetic turf.

Synthetic turf, as an alternative to natural grass, has been installed at several campuses throughout the District. It is a grass-like ground cover that replicates lush natural grass in appearance and function. When installed at athletic fields and properly maintained, synthetic turf can provide a consistent year-round, all-weather playing surface built to withstand extended use with minimal downtime for recovery.

As the installation of synthetic turf fields has increased as an alternative to natural grass, it has become increasingly important for the District to set forth a policy that establishes the process for selecting between natural grass and synthetic turf for District playfields. This process considers:

- The necessary prerequisites for initiating a synthetic turf field installation project including evaluation criteria, need determination, environmental impacts, and a formal approval process;
- A thorough determination of field surface replacement capital costs and future maintenance demands;
- The need for consistency in evaluating proposed synthetic turf fields and the standardization of materials and designs;
- Coordination with school administrators and community stakeholders.

This policy does not mandate the removal of natural turf or the installation of synthetic turf at any location. Flexibility will be maintained in selecting a type of field suitable for each site.

ROUTING
All Employees
All Locations



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MAJOR CHANGES: This is a new Bulletin.

GUIDELINES I. SELECTION OF NEW OR REPLACEMENT FIELD

- A. When synthetic turf is considered as a new installation, a renovation, or a field replacement project, the project initiator must work closely with Facilities Services Division staff to evaluate the viability of the field project. The evaluation at a minimum will consist of the following:
- i. Completion of the *Synthetic Turf Project Request Form* by the Project Initiator (Attachment A);
 - ii. Initial project review by the Sustainability Initiatives Unit, Project Planning and Development, Technical Services Unit and other related offices within the Facilities Services Division;

This process ensures staff has evaluated all project considerations such as community access to existing playfields, joint-use or community partnerships, current and future field utilization, safety, cost, and the District's use of water resources.

Staff performing the evaluation consists of the Architectural and Engineering Services Department (District Landscape Architect); Technical Services Unit, Design Standards Unit, the Landscape Technical Supervisor, Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS), and the Project Planning and Development Department.

New synthetic fields will generally be considered only where there is high use and shared cost with third-party users. Existing synthetic turf fields will be replaced with new synthetic turf fields unless it is not a high usage area. Other considerations may include the current and expected amount of usage, the type of usage, the initial investment, maintenance, replacement costs, staffing, and material costs.

Replacement will vary based upon the use and condition of the field. Typical replacement occurs between 8 and 10 years. For site-specific field replacement information, the Landscape Technical Supervisor should review the contract, warranty information, and assess current field conditions to determine the appropriate replacement method for the synthetic field. OEHS strongly recommends that once the synthetic turf field reaches the end of its useful life, the options to recycle and repurpose be evaluated to avoid materials being transported to landfills.



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The Landscape Technical Supervisor and the District Landscape Architect will examine and assess the field condition and make a recommendation on whether it should be replaced, and if so, by synthetic or natural grass turf.

If the decision is made to remove and dispose of the entire turf system, the Landscape Technical Supervisor will ensure that the contract includes language pertaining to the proper removal and disposal of synthetic turf by the contractor.

- B. Approval of a project to install a synthetic turf field will depend on the extent to which it provides:
- i. Extended hours of play – Synthetic turf provides extended hours of play and allows greater school and community use;
 - ii. Reduced maintenance costs – Synthetic turf fields have a relatively high installation cost, which can be offset by the savings generated from potentially lower maintenance costs when compared to natural turf fields and by financial contributions from joint-use partners and community groups;
 - iii. Reduced water usage – Synthetic turf fields, when used and maintained properly, require minimal water usage, which promotes conservation and lowers consumption costs.

The Facilities Acquisition Strategy Board will conduct final review and make a recommendation for approval to the Bond Oversight Committee and the Board of Education.

II. SYNTHETIC FIELD PROPER USE AND CARE

Proper use of synthetic playfields is the responsibility of school staff, teachers, students, and community users. The Maintenance and Operations Branch technical staff, Complex Project Managers, and Plant Managers support the care and maintenance of synthetic turf fields by school maintenance staff.

- A. Staff must follow manufacturer-recommended guidelines for activities performed on synthetic turf fields. Appropriate signage should be displayed in areas visible near playfields that inform all users about the proper usage of the field. Signage should be placed along the perimeter of the field that explains the types of activities that are prohibited on and around the field. All signage should be in both English and Spanish.



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- B. Appropriate precautions must be taken by staff when using synthetic turf outside its recommended guidelines. There are a number of activities that may cause damage to the field such as:
 - i. Movement of equipment;
 - ii. Playing certain sports such as golf or shot put;
 - iii. Events such as graduation, which require the placement of chairs and may include exposure to footwear such as high heels worn on the field, etc.
- C. Any joint or shared use agreement must provide funding for the installation and/or the on-going maintenance costs of the synthetic turf field. Moreover, the agreement must include stringent conditions prohibiting animals, bicycles and skateboards, food and drink, glass containers, sunflower seeds, gum, painting/chalking, stakes or spikes, or improper footwear on the synthetic turf field(s). These guidelines will be provided to any third party entity or group utilizing the field with the appropriate approvals.

III. SYNTHETIC FIELD MAINTENANCE

A. Routine Preventative Maintenance

Synthetic turf can tolerate more hours of competitive play and longer seasons than natural grass turf with significantly less downtime necessary for proper maintenance. Routine preventative maintenance is required to maximize the lifespan of a synthetic turf field.

The basic steps for synthetic turf field maintenance include:

- i. *Keeping the surface free of debris*
Each Plant Manager is responsible for keeping the field free of debris on a daily basis and ensuring sufficient trash can capacity in the vicinity of synthetic turf fields. Additionally, the Plant Manager is responsible for ensuring that debris left behind by third-party users is removed, and that any improper use of the field is reported to the Site Administrator so that proper use of the field may be enforced.
- ii. *Keeping the fibers in an upright position and the infill from compacting*
Machine brushing, sweeping, grooming and top dressing shall be performed by the District's Landscape Department. Such maintenance ensures that field fibers and in-fill materials are evenly spread resulting



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in a consistent play area and an extended useful life of the synthetic turf field. These preventive maintenance activities shall be performed on the industry recommended routine maintenance schedule:

- a. Machine-groom –performed at least once per month;
- b. Power-groom– performed every other year at a maximum and used to deep-clean and de-compact the infill or to remove excess infill on an older field;
- c. Tine raking – performed 2-3 times a year to help keep the infill materials from being compacted. (If this is performed on a regular basis, power-grooming should not be necessary);
- d. Top-dressing Infill materials– should be added on as-needed basis and annually to ensure even distribution of materials.

iii. *Keeping the field cool*

Synthetic turf fields retain heat and produce higher temperatures than natural turf fields, which means they require more cooling. Synthetic turf fields should be lightly watered-down to reduce the heat prior to use on high temperature days.

B. Inspection Protocols

The Landscape Technical Supervisor, and/ or Synthetic Turf Consultant is responsible for inspecting synthetic turf fields for the proper maintenance and prompt repair of tears, lifted seams, rippling and other disruptions of the field surface. Staff is expected to follow the standard inspection protocols. All repairs should be performed by a qualified synthetic turf technician.

Use of Standard Inspection Protocols

- i. Frequency – Inspection is recommended every other month.
- ii. Components inspected – Seams, hash marks, inlays, infill levels, turf fiber height, turf connection edges.
- iii. Documentation – The Landscape Technical Supervisor must complete a report for maintenance performed during each visit including a map identifying the location of repairs. Once completed, the report along with an estimate of repairs is provided to the Complex Project Manager (CPM) and kept as part of the maintenance records for the respective school site. Should repairs be required, the CPM will review and verify the estimates with the Landscape Technical Supervisor and upon approval, execute the needed repairs.



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- iv. Reporting Chain – Landscape Technical staff will develop condition reports, take appropriate corrective action and forward a report to the CPM who will keep a file on all maintenance and repair work performed on the field.

- C. Maintenance at charter school campuses can vary based upon the stipulations set forth in the charter school’s agreement with the District. For specific roles and responsibilities concerning the maintenance of school facilities, the school’s lease agreement will need to be referenced.

IV. FUNDING STRATEGIES

The Facilities Services Division will utilize the following funding options when initiating the installation or the replacement of synthetic turf fields:

- A. Continue the use of bond funding for the replacement of existing synthetic turf fields;

- B. Use shared funding when converting a natural field to synthetic turf, i.e., bond funding provided by the Critical Repair program (50%) with contributions from other programs (e.g. Board Member Priority and Local District Priority or other) for the remaining 50%.

- C. Support joint-use agreements for synthetic turf fields which include maintenance and re-capitalization contributions;

- D. Promote leasing of our synthetic turf fields and augment revenues to help offset the cost of field replacement.

AUTHORITY: This is a policy of the Facilities Services Division.



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RELATED RESOURCES:

1. School Design Guidelines (School Design Guide, Technical Guide Specification and Standard Technical Drawings).
2. BUL-5993: Procedures for Third-Party Use of School Facilities during Non-School Hours
3. BUL-963.2: Guidelines for Preventing Heat Stress
4. Heat Illness Prevention Posters

ASSISTANCE:

For assistance or further information, please contact Architectural and Engineering Services at (213) 241-0813.