

Press release

Investor relations

Incorrect reporting in De Telegraaf on research report on infill used in artificial grass

In its 31 May 2006 edition, the Dutch daily newspaper, De Telegraaf, once again reported a number of factual inaccuracies on the use of SBR rubber in artificial grass fields. The report by no means implies any of the statements reported in the intended article.

Principals and purpose

- The research was commissioned by leading companies in the artificial grass industry, the rubber processing industry, the ISA Sport test institute, the NOC/NSF and the KNVB.
- The purpose of the research was to obtain more detailed insight into the leaching of (mainly) metals in practice, and to initiate research into the purported harmful effects it may have on the public health. This stands in stark contrast to the statements carried in the report in De Telegraaf to the effect that the research targeted the “hazards posed by artificial grass”. The balanced composition of the policy groups responsible for the research indicates that the industry is assuming full responsibility for its social position in this regard. The research is being conducted as a multi-phase project, whereby the first phase is dedicated to the generation of factual information.

Erroneous interpretation of conclusions concerning health and environmental aspects

- De Telegraaf claims that artificial grass definitely poses hazards with respect to health and environmental aspects. This is however not the conclusion drawn in the report in question.
- De Telegraaf further claims that, according to the report, zinc leaching is assuming ‘disturbing forms’. The latter conclusion is by no means borne out by the report.
- The same applies to the statement, by De Telegraaf, to the effect that the levels by which leaching exceeds the limiting values (zinc) are ‘alarming’.
- The potentially harmful substances mainly include zinc, volatile chemicals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. Artificial grass fields that use SBR rubber and are laid in accordance with industry standards fully comply with the limiting values for zinc leaching, as well as for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons levels. As no specific limiting values have as yet been determined for sports fields, the most relevant standards applicable in this case are the conditions of the Building Materials Decree (Bouwstoffenbesluit). The decree however stipulates that a minimum of **20 cm infill** must be used, while, in practice, only **2-3 cm rubber infill** is being used. In accordance with the standards prescribed by the

Building Materials Decree (which are unrealistic for artificial sports fields) the only limiting values that are exceeded are those applicable to zinc leaching. In other words, these limiting values are not exceeded in the case of sports fields. It does however specify the need for more detailed attention to the issue of the correct use of rubber infill and good "housekeeping", whereby the infill must remain in place on the field.

- Although research has been conducted in several countries into the possible harmful effects of rubber infill, with comparable results, only the Italian football federation has so far actually issued a ban on the use of untreated rubber granulates. To date, no other country has as yet considered this necessary.
- There is also no specific legislation available with respect to public health. The most relevant standards in that regard are the European standards applicable to the toy manufacturing industry and the recent recommendation issued by TÜV with respect to the directives for the evaluation of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons levels in fixed products.
- The following are the conclusions drawn by the report with respect to health risks:
 - All heavy metal levels are in compliance with the standards applicable to toy manufacturing and the risk of harmful effects on sportsmen and women is therefore negligible.
 - The levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons fail to comply with the TÜV directives in the case of skin contact exceeding 30 seconds. The question as to whether extended skin contact is actually harmful has not been answered satisfactorily by any research projects conducted to date. Short periods of skin contact (whether realistic in the case of, e.g. a slide) are therefore deemed risk free.
 - Indoor and outdoor use of rubber infill poses absolutely no risk to sportsmen/sportswomen or other parties concerned through inhalation.
- Further research needs to be done on a number of aspects, including long-term skin contact with rubber infill. The conclusion, on the grounds of this research, to the effect that artificial grass fields with rubber infill are harmful to the public health, is therefore premature and incorrect. There is no direct reason to forthwith stop the use of rubber infill in artificial grass sports fields.

Role played by TenCate

TenCate is a participant in this research project because, as a market leader in the field of artificial grass fibres, it wishes to plead for the use of the safest possible system that will, at the same time, retain its play-technical properties for the longest possible period of time. By conducting this research, TenCate wishes to demonstrate its commitment to its social responsibility in the industry. The industry research contributes to the determination of enhanced quality criteria for artificial grass sports fields through the collection of the necessary factual information.

TenCate has been producing an alternative for rubber infill since 2004: This is partially done with a view to ensuring the full recyclability of these types of sports fields in the longer term. The new type of infill also retains its play-technical qualities in the long term. The system has been used for, among other applications, the training fields at KNVB, AZ and AFC Ajax and the main playing field at Heracles Almelo. For more detailed information, please refer to the Ten Cate Thiolon website

(www.thiolon.com)

Conclusion

TenCate maintains the view that the use of rubber infill is fully responsible, both with respect to public health and the environment. TenCate will continue to strive for further optimization and innovation with respect to continuing developments in the advancement of artificial grass systems. In the long term, TenCate expects alternative infill materials to be more easily available to the volume market.

Royal Ten Cate

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For further information:

F.R. Spaan

Head of Investor Relations/ Corporate Affairs

+31 546 54 43 38

f.spaan@tencate.com

www.tencate.com