

MAINTENANCE OF RUNNING TRACKS

Many of the Harford County public high school running tracks have been resurfaced as part of an ongoing program to provide modern, safe, resilient track facilities for school and community use. In the past, once the track was resurfaced, little if any maintenance was performed, and the track began deteriorating prematurely. With proper care, the new surface should last five years depending, in part, on additional community use.

If the resurfacing program is to continue and be successful, cooperation in providing basic maintenance to prolong the life of the newly surfaced track and runway areas is necessary.

Following are some suggested basic maintenance rules:

- Vehicles should not be on the track. This includes homecoming floats and trucks, maintenance vehicles, and where, possible, ambulances. If space allows, vehicles could be driven on the field between the track and sidelines. This means the vehicles would have to cross the track, which should be done at one designated point. If there is no alternative, then vehicles may be permitted on the track under close supervision, and under no circumstances should quick starts, stops, or sharp turns be made while the vehicle is moving.
- Sheets of exterior plywood or exterior carpeting should be used to cover the track where football teams cross for practice or actual games. Whatever material is used should be removed immediately. Do not leave this material on the track surface for prolonged periods because tracks retain moisture, which is detrimental to the surface.
- Remove any dirt or mud immediately as these elements will deteriorate a track surface quicker than any foot traffic. If there is an erosion problem which continues to wash dirt onto the track or if erosion is occurring at the edge of the track and is undermining a section of the track, a request to the Facilities Maintenance Department should be made to review and correct the problem.
- If the school building services workers have power blowers, these can be used to blow debris off the track just before the track season begins. Also, push brooms can be used effectively to remove debris.
- One of the most critical problems faced is grass and weeds growing underneath the track service. Because of limited resources, curbs have not been provided around the edges of the track. This becomes a difficult problem to correct because an herbicide would need to be applied directly to the new track surface, dramatically reducing its life expectancy. The State of Maryland Department of Agriculture has issued pesticide regulations, which briefly state that all public agencies are required to obtain a public agency permit and designate a certified public agency applicator to apply pesticides, i.e., herbicides and insecticides. This includes general use herbicides purchased over the county as well as the restricted use of herbicides.
- Track coaches need to be cognizant of practicing a particular event at the same spot on the track. Constant foot traffic at one particular spot will wear away any surface. Therefore, stagger the practice or training area so as to not utilize the same area each time.
- No surface is perfect or will last forever. New products and materials are being developed constantly. The present surfacing used is a latex bound rubber particle material and is very durable. However, occasionally an area or piece of the existing track may show signs of deterioration. These areas are easily repaired and should be reported immediately to the Supervisor of High School Physical Education and Interscholastic Athletics. Shortly after a new track surface has been applied, some of the residue rubber particles may come loose and it may appear that the track is coming apart. This is a normal occurrence and should not be of concern.