

## Reed Union School District Herbicide Questions and Answers

The final phase of the bond construction work has included the installation of three new beautiful athletic fields. These fields will provide many years of safe and exciting usage for our children and community, but they will only remain in top condition with proper care and maintenance. This maintenance will include periodic closures, a weather station irrigation system for water conservation and efficiency, a fertilization plan, as well as weed control, which will include hand weeding and area sod replacement, as needed. The periodic use of herbicides will be a last resort. The number one concern is the safety of everyone who will be using our fields.

The use of herbicides has raised some questions and the purpose of the following is to provide answers.

### ***1. What is an herbicide and is it safe to use on a school athletic field?***

The herbicides typically used on athletic fields to control broadleaf weeds are similar to a plant hormone or growth regulator called auxin, which controls the expansion of plant cell walls. The herbicide does not degrade in the plant as quickly as the natural auxin does, resulting in uncontrolled plant cell division and elongation, killing the weed. Because animals (of course, including humans) have neither cell walls nor the related hormone system, this type of herbicide provides a large measure of safety to animals, including humans.

### ***2. What herbicide was applied on the Athletic Fields and is it harmful to children?***

The herbicide applied was Turflon (triclopyr). The standard formula is a dilution of 1.1 oz. to three gallons of water, which equals a 0.3% concentration. It is not harmful to children or adults.

### ***3. Are there organic alternatives that can be used instead of herbicides?***

Turf weeds are plants growing in close association with other plants. Selective herbicides are the only way to control the weeds without killing the turf. There are no selective organic or alternative weed control materials. Hand-pulling the weeds is not practical in areas of large infestation because the weeds should be pulled when they are small, before the turf cover is disrupted. Pulling large weeds tends to disrupt the soil and makes a space for a new weed to grow. Selective herbicides slowly kill the weed while the grass is simultaneously filling in the space where the weed was. This minimizes exposing bare soil, which can be displaced causing a depression or compacted so the grass can't grow. The result is an uneven play field that is unsafe for athletic purposes.

**4. *Why is it necessary to apply an herbicide on the Reed Athletic Field?***

Weeds were invading the turf and herbicides are the only practical way to control them. The application of herbicides is a widely used and common practice, as there is no other practical way to control weeds on large sports fields. Hand-picking would be tremendously labor intensive, but also fairly ineffective, often missing the small new growth weeds and/or the ones just barely germinating. Herbicide application is only used in rare incidences, as a last resort.

**5. *Under what authority can the District use herbicides in schools?***

Herbicides are regulated by the Federal EPA, Cal EPA, and the Marin County Agricultural Commissioner. Additionally, the District adheres to the California Healthy Schools Act and Reed Union School District Board Policy 3514.2, Integrated Pest Management. Additional information on the State of California School Integrated Pest Management Program is available at their web site: <http://www.schoolipm.info/>

**6. *What is integrated pest management (IPM)?***

Integrated pest management is a widely encouraged and accepted approach to pest management that results in effective suppression of pest populations while minimizing human health and environmental hazards.

**7. *If the District had used sod instead of seeding, would that have eliminated the need to use an herbicide?***

It would not matter if sod or seed had been used. All turf will get some weed infestation and athletic fields, subject to more intense wear, usually get more weeds.

***If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Superintendent Christine Carter at 381-1112 or by email to the Superintendent's Assistant Ellen Mayer at [emayer@marin.k12.ca.us](mailto:emayer@marin.k12.ca.us).***