

## NEW TURF GETTING TEST AT MIDWAY

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Widely used on athletic fields, artificial turf is being expanded to an unlikely place: airports.

Midway Airport is the first in the country to test a new type of fake grass, developed by a Loop company to reduce maintenance costs and improve safety on airfields.

The material--called "AvTurf®" and made by Airport Surface Technologies--is designed for non-paved areas between runways and taxiways.

The synthetic green surface can improve visibility and doesn't need to be mowed, so fewer aircraft accidents and near-collisions are anticipated, said company president Pat Carr, a Gulf War veteran. "Runway incursions" have been increasing at an alarming rate nationally, he noted.

Other expected benefits include fewer bird strikes--birds may not congregate on a fake surface as much as a real one, where insects are plentiful--and easier driving for planes and emergency vehicles without digging up grass or getting stuck in the mud, Carr said.

"It brings everything up to what the regulations state: rut-free, depression-free, a totally uniform surface," said the Tinley Park resident, who developed the idea last year while working on a project for the Air Force Reserve.

Midway has tested the material--which is placed over crushed, level aggregate rock--since last year along a taxiway. So far it's shown to be durable, said Chicago aviation spokeswoman Monique Bond. But the city is awaiting input from the federal government before deciding on expanding AvTurf's use.