



The British winter can take its toll on synthetic sports surfaces, leaving behind a trail of standing water, surface silt and health & safety risks. Furthermore, the recent spate of poor summers have done little to ease the pressure on artificial pitches and courts, which as 'all-weather' facilities are expected to be in peak condition all-year round.

Treating winter ailments

GROWING numbers of pitch managers are being forced to cancel fixtures during the winter months, discovering that their synthetic surfaces are insufficiently prepared to withstand both the increased rainfall and the resultant mud and sludge being trafficked onto the pitch by users.

Cancellations in winter soon create a downward spiral of lost revenue, from which it can be hard to recover. In such circumstances, spending time and money on maintenance is often rejected in favour of accruing some much-needed income as the weather begins to improve. However, continually postponing maintenance until such time as a synthetic surface can no longer function without urgent remedial works is a false economy, leading to a

reduced life expectancy and even higher costs, warns synthetic pitch maintenance company, Technical Surfaces.

Scheduled

"It is important to remember that maintenance is not just an annual requirement; the vast majority of procedures can – and should – be completed year-round," says the company. However, specialist works can be introduced at a later stage, that will help to combat the effects of winter. Technical Surfaces' 'Winter Revival' programme helps to deal with surface mud and sludge, 'Repairs' is designed to fix any failed seams or inlaid lines weakened by the colder climate, and 'Regeneration'

Above left **Standing water becomes a health hazard on synthetic surfaces when not maintained**

Above right **Failed seams**

removes the deeper contamination that causes standing water.

Regular preventative maintenance programmes will help stop such problems from developing in the first place, emphasises Technical Surfaces. "While it may be tempting just to 'muddle through' the winter months, with good intentions of getting around to sorting out that persistent standing water when the weather improves, the current climate offers no guarantees, and surface issues are often symptomatic of deeper-seated problems, which will only worsen if ignored."



Meeting the FIFA spec

FIFA 2* STATUS bestows on a facility a standard of artificial grass high enough to host UEFA Champions League matches and FIFA final round competitions.

To The New Saints FC, a club in the Welsh Premier League, an artificial surface of this quality provides the opportunity to potentially host lucrative European fixtures. To ensure the pitch continues to meet a high standard and withstand season after season of football matches in Wales' top division, the club has now implemented a maintenance package with Technical Surfaces.

The contractor runs a similar programme at Saltley Leisure Centre in Birmingham, where the pitch passed a FIFA testing process for a second year running.