

INSTALLING MARBLE TILES

How to avoid warpage, staining, shading, soft spots, blisters and bond failures.

Unsatisfactory marble tile installations can be avoided with some simple considerations when certain types of marble tiles are chosen. Selecting the right bonding material by consulting with the tile manufacturer, tile distributor or adhesive manufacturer can be simple. The following guidelines will help eliminate costly errors and installation problems.

NATURAL MARBLE

When marble tiles are produced, they are cut to the narrowest thickness that can be handled, polished, packaged, shipped and installed without breakage. Cutting the marble in this manner produces the most tiles from a block of marble, which increases its availability and lowers the costs. These thin-cut marble tiles rely on proper bonding materials to produce a satisfactory installation.

BONDING GREEN, RED, AND BLACK COLORED NATURAL MARBLE TILE

These marble tiles contain certain minerals (example: all green marble contains serpentine) that soften, blister, swell or curl when they come in contact with water or moisture. All green marbles, some black, and certain red marbles are water-sensitive. It is always best to ask the marble tile manufacturer if the tile is water- and moisture-sensitive. These moisture-sensitive tiles should be bonded with CUSTOM®'s EBM-Lite™ Epoxy Bonding Mortar – 100% Solids. EBM-Lite™ is specially formulated to inhibit warping and staining of moisture-sensitive stone. All other dry-set mortars, epoxy emulsion mortars and mastics contain water and should not be used.

BONDING LIGHT COLORED OR TRANSLUCENT MARBLE TILE

Exterior and interior lighting can pass through these types of tile. Once it has been installed, light-colored or translucent marble tile will show shadows or "ghosting" from dark or dissimilar colored bonding materials. This problem can be eliminated by using a "white" adhesive or dry-set mortar and making sure that all tiles installed achieve full (100%) contact with the setting materials. The easiest way to achieve full contact with the tile is to back-butter the tile in addition to troweling bonding material on the substrate.

BONDING FIBER REINFORCED RESIN-BACKED MARBLE TILE

These tiles are cut exceptionally thin but are reinforced with fiber mesh and resin coating at 1/32" - 1/16" (.8 x 1.6 mm) in thickness. These resin-back coated tiles have a very inert and nonporous bond surface that requires the extra bond strength of CUSTOM®'s EBM-Lite™ Epoxy Bonding Mortar – 100% Solids.

AVOIDING DISCOLORED MARBLE TILE AND TILE EDGES

Cutting of the marble at the job site is required as an installation becomes more intricate or involves a decorative design pattern. The cutting saw used to make custom cuts in the tiles requires a liquid to cool the cutting blade. Most of the time, this liquid is common water. When a cutting saw is used, the cooling liquid or water will accumulate fine particles or grindings. As the marble tiles are being cut by the saw and sprayed with the contaminated water, staining of certain tile pieces or tile edges will occur. This can be avoided by cleaning debris from the saw and changing to clean water when different colored tiles are to be cut on the saw.

MOISTURE STAINING

Marble tiles that are not water sensitive may show some darkening due to absorption of moisture/water from the setting materials or maintenance. This moisture darkening is caused by the tiny capillaries, or pores, within the marble holding water. The moisture staining remains temporarily until the water evaporates.

CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Natural marble tiles are soft and porous, and will etch and absorb liquids. To avoid surface stains and prevent etching, clean the marble with a neutral cleaner approved for use on natural marble. The same criteria will hold true for any sealers, polishes or waxes used on the installation. Use the same care and cleaning with the grout as used in the marble installation. Using sealers and cleaners approved as safe or recommended for natural marble, such as StoneSpecific® or TileLab® Penetrating Sealers, will prevent problems.

If you require further assistance or additional information please contact CUSTOM® Technical Services.

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