



Technical Bulletin # 131

RE: Cleaning Flood Damaged Ceramic Tile Floors

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CLEANING FLOOD DAMAGED CERAMIC TILE:

Quick attention to clean up after a flood or water damage is essential. Exposure over time to flood water or contaminated water increases the likelihood of mold and bacterial growth which can pose serious health concerns.

Ceramic tile will generally withstand flood or water damage well; however, the subflooring and walls to which the tile may be attached to may not dry out satisfactorily- ultimately leading to the removal of substrates and subfloors. Generally, wood subfloors will need to be removed and replaced if they are warped, buckled or water damaged. Concrete slab installations will weather flood damage better than wood subfloor installations.

It is absolutely necessary to start the drying process throughout the structure as soon as possible. Cross ventilation is an effective means of promoting drying of the structure. Use fans to increase air movement. Keep the structure well ventilated until the interior materials are completely dry.

EVALUATION OF THE CERAMIC TILE

Completely inspect all supporting and subfloor and wall structures for the presence of mold. Allow adequate time for complete drying out of the structure, typically between 1 and 6 weeks.

Evaluate the soundness of the tile installation by first visually examining the tile for buckling or lifting which may occur up to several weeks after drying out. Tap on the tile with a blunt object or bounce a golf ball to check for hollowness. Hollow sounding tile should be removed.

While this bulletin mainly addresses floor tile installations, wall tile installations over true cementitious backerboard may also be salvaged. The wall cavity should be allowed to completely dry out by removing any sheetrock or drywall on the opposite side of the wall. In most cases sheetrock that is exposed to even temporary flooding will be permanently damaged.

CLEAN-UP PROCEDURES:

1. After removal of water damaged materials, scrub and clean all exposed surfaces with TSP (Trisodium Phosphate). Use a solution of ½ cup TSP (or TSP Substitute) dissolved in warm clean water. Using a stiff nylon brush scrub the surface of the tile and the grout vigorously. Rinse and flush sludge and contaminants with clean water using a wet/dry vacuum to remove wash-water residue. Do not use TSP on painted surfaces, metal or unintended surfaces. Follow local regulations regarding disposal. Allow the installation to dry.
2. Once the installation is clean and dry it is important to disinfect the installation. Use a water/bleach solution of five (5) parts water to one (1) part bleach. A standard garden-type sprayer will help facilitate the application of the bleach mixture. It is important to wear a respirator, rubber gloves and face protection when cleaning with a strong solution of bleach. Scrub and wash down all tiled surfaces with the bleach solution. Do not use bleach on fabrics, wood or unintended surfaces. Follow local regulations regarding disposal.
3. Grout that is stained or discolored after clean up can be re-colored and sealed using a grout stain or colorant. It is important that the grout is completely dry prior to the application of grout stain.

PRECAUTIONS:

Caution should be used not to disturb, breakup or sand certain types of flooring materials that may contain asbestos. Inhalation of asbestos dust from removal or sanding may cause bodily harm.

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