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Document: Post-Installation Deep Cleaning & Maintenance Procedures

Application: Porcelain Tile and Ceramic Tile Surfaces

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POST-INSTALLATION DEEP CLEANING & MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

INITIAL CLEANING • GROUT RESIDUE REMOVAL • DEEP CLEANING • ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

1. INITIAL CLEANING AFTER INSTALLATION AND GROUTING

Proper cleaning immediately following installation and grouting is an essential part of the installation process.

After the tile has been installed and grouted, the installer must remove all excess grout, mortar, adhesive, construction debris, and other installation-related residues from the tile surface.

Grout and installation residues should not be allowed to dry or cure on the tile surface whenever they can be removed while fresh.

The cleaning method and timing must follow the grout and installation-material manufacturer's instructions, including the manufacturer's specified cleaning window.

Cleaning should be performed progressively during installation rather than postponing all cleaning until the entire project has been completed.

Fresh Grout ResidueDuring grouting:

- Work in manageable areas.
- Remove excess grout from the tile surface as the work progresses.
- Use a clean, properly wrung grout sponge.
- Clean diagonally across the grout joints.
- Rinse the sponge frequently using clean water.
- Replace dirty rinse water frequently.
- Avoid spreading grout residue over previously cleaned areas.
- Perform a final wipe with clean water as required.
- Do not leave a layer of dirty water or grout slurry on the tile surface.

Excessive water should be avoided, particularly with cementitious grouts, because excessive water during the cleaning process can affect grout appearance and performance.

The installer is responsible for completing the initial cleaning and removing visible grout and installation residues before leaving the completed installation.

2. POST-INSTALLATION DEEP CLEANING

Once installation and grouting are complete, the entire tiled surface should be inspected and, when necessary, subjected to a thorough post-installation cleaning.

The purpose of post-installation deep cleaning is to remove:

- Cementitious grout haze;
- Residual grout film;
- Premixed or urethane grout residue;
- Epoxy grout residue;
- Mortar and adhesive residue;
- Construction dust and soil;
- Other installation-related contamination.

The appropriate cleaning method depends on the type of residue and the type of grout or installation material used.

Do not select a cleaning chemical solely on the basis that the surface is porcelain tile. The chemical must be appropriate for the specific residue being removed and compatible with the tile finish and adjacent materials.

3. CEMENTITIOUS GROUT HAZE AND RESIDUE

Cementitious grout can leave a thin mineral film, commonly referred to as grout haze, on the tile surface. Fresh residue should be removed during the normal grouting cleanup process.

If a cementitious haze remains after the initial cleaning, use a cleaning product specifically formulated for cementitious grout haze and approved for use on porcelain tiles.

Recommended Cleaning Sequence

1. Remove loose dust and debris from the surface.
2. Dilute the cleaning product strictly according to the manufacturer's instructions which can be read on the product label or the Data Sheet found on the web site
3. Work in small, manageable sections.
4. Apply the solution evenly.
5. Allow the product to dwell only for the time specified by the manufacturer.
6. Agitate the residue using an appropriate non-abrasive pad (White) with suitable floor machine (we recommend a single-brush machine with a rotation of 175 / 190 rpm).
7. Recover the dirty solution rather than allowing it to dry on the surface. For this purpose, use a vacuum cleaner to remove all the resulting dirt.
8. Rinse thoroughly with clean water and microfiber mop. Collect the rinse water again with the vacuum cleaner and repeat the operation until the surface is completely free of cleaning solution.
9. Repeat the process only when necessary and within the manufacturer's recommended application limits.
10. Allow the surface to dry completely and inspect the result.
11. Acidic grout-haze removers may be appropriate for cementitious residues on acid-resistant porcelain tiles; however, they must only be used when specifically approved for the surface and according to the cleaner manufacturer's instructions.

Never increase the concentration or dwell time of a cleaning chemical beyond the manufacturer's

stated recommendations.

4. PREMIXED, ACRYLIC OR URETHANE GROUT RESIDUE

Premixed, acrylic, urethane, and other non-cementitious grouts may leave residues that require a different cleaning chemistry than cementitious grout.

Do not automatically use an acidic grout-haze remover on these materials.

Use a cleaner specifically recommended for the type of grout used.

The manufacturer's instructions for the grout should be consulted before selecting the cleaning product and cleaning method.

Whenever possible, these residues should be removed within the grout manufacturer's specified cleaning window, before they become difficult to remove.

5. EPOXY GROUT RESIDUE

Epoxy grout requires particular attention during installation because residue becomes significantly more difficult to remove after the material has fully cured.

The installer should remove epoxy residue during the manufacturer's specified cleaning window.

If cured or partially cured epoxy residue remains on the porcelain tile surface, use a product specifically formulated for epoxy grout haze or epoxy residue and approved for the tile surface.

Do not use a conventional cementitious grout-haze remover as a substitute for an epoxy grout remover.

Follow the epoxy grout manufacturer's instructions regarding cleaning timing, cleaning solution, agitation, and final rinsing.

6. REMOVAL OF ADHESIVE, MORTAR AND OTHER CONSTRUCTION RESIDUES

Adhesive, mortar, paint, construction dust, and other job-site contaminants should be removed as soon as practical.

The appropriate removal method depends on the type of material and its condition.

Fresh Residues

Fresh material should generally be removed mechanically using a suitable non-abrasive method before it hardens.

Hardened Residues

For hardened material, use a removal product specifically designed for the type of residue and confirmed as compatible with the porcelain tile surface.

Do not use metal scrapers, razor blades, steel wool, or other aggressive mechanical methods that may damage the surface.

7. CLEANING CHEMICAL SELECTION

The following table provides general guidance:

Residue / Soil	Recommended Cleaner Type	Important Consideration
Cementitious grout haze	Cement/grout haze remover	Acidic chemistry only when approved
Premixed / Urethane grout	Grout-residue remover specified for the product	Follow grout manufacturer's instructions
Epoxy grout	Epoxy grout haze/residue remover	Use product specifically formulated for epoxy
Construction soil	Appropriate heavy-duty tile cleaner	Verify compatibility
Grease or oily contamination	Suitable degreaser	Rinse thoroughly
Routine soil	Neutral cleaner	Recommended for regular maintenance

The table provides general guidance only. Always follow the current technical data and safety instructions of the cleaning-product manufacturer

8. IMPORTANT CLEANING PRECAUTIONS

Before using any chemical cleaning product:

- Read the product label, Technical Data Sheet (TDS), and Safety Data Sheet (SDS).
- Verify that the product is approved for the specific porcelain tile surface and finish.
- Test the product on a small, inconspicuous area or on an unused piece of the same tile whenever possible.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommended dilution and dwell time.
- Do not allow cleaning chemicals to dry on the surface.
- Protect adjacent materials that may be sensitive to the cleaning chemical.
- Use the personal protective equipment (PPE) required by the chemical manufacturer.
- Never mix different cleaning chemicals unless specifically permitted by the manufacturers.

Particular Care with Acidic Cleaners

Acidic cleaners may damage or discolor acid-sensitive materials, including certain metals, natural stone, cementitious materials, and other adjacent surfaces.

Protect adjacent surfaces before applying an acidic cleaner.

Do not use hydrofluoric-acid-containing products on porcelain tile.

9. FINAL RINSE AND INSPECTION

After post installation cleaning, the surface must be thoroughly rinsed to remove dissolved residue and remaining cleaning solution.

Do not allow dirty cleaning solution to dry on the tile surface.

Use a vacuum cleaner to remove all the resulting dirt.

Avoid walking on the surface until it is completely dry

Once dry, inspect the installation.

The finished surface should be free from visible:

- Grout haze;
- Grout residue;
- Adhesive or mortar residue;
- Construction debris;
- Cleaning-product film;
- Streaking or visible soil.

If residue remains, determine its composition before selecting another cleaning chemical.

Do not progressively increase chemical strength without identifying the residue and verifying the manufacturer's recommended cleaning method.

10. PROTECTION AFTER INSTALLATION

After the initial cleaning has been completed, the finished floor should be protected from subsequent construction activities.

Protection materials should be appropriate for the installation and should not trap moisture against the tile or grout.

Avoid placing abrasive debris or construction materials directly on the finished surface.

Any temporary floor protection should be installed and removed according to the requirements of the flooring, grout, adhesive, and protection-material manufacturers.

The use of plastic as a cover is not recommended since plastic become slippery and has a tendency to delay the natural curing process of the thin-set and grout.

11. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Porcelain tile generally requires relatively simple routine maintenance when properly installed and cleaned.

Regular Cleaning

Routine maintenance should include:

1. Remove loose dirt and debris by sweeping, dust mopping, or vacuuming.
2. Damp mop the surface using clean water and an appropriate neutral cleaner.
3. Follow the cleaner manufacturer's recommended dilution.
4. Change dirty solution frequently.
5. Avoid leaving excessive water or cleaning solution on the floor.
6. Always rinse the surface with clean water.
7. Allow the surface to dry completely.
8. The frequency of cleaning should be determined by traffic, use, environmental conditions, and the type and amount of soil present.

Periodic Deep Cleaning

Where routine cleaning is insufficient to remove accumulated soil, grease, or other contamination, a suitable deep-cleaning product may be used.

The cleaning method should be selected according to the type of soil present and the recommendations of the cleaning-product manufacturer.

Mechanical agitation using an appropriate non-abrasive pad (white) or washer-Dryer machine may be used

on large commercial installations when suitable for the tile surface.

12. INSTALLER RESPONSIBILITY

The installer is responsible for properly cleaning the tile surface following installation and grouting.

Installation-related residues, including grout, mortar, adhesive, construction debris, and cleaning-product residue, must be removed as part of the installation and final cleanup process.

The installer must:

- Follow the tile, grout, adhesive, and cleaning-product manufacturers' instructions.
- Remove excess grout while it is still within the manufacturer's recommended cleaning window.
- Complete the required post-installation cleaning before turnover of the finished installation.
- Select cleaning chemicals appropriate for the specific type of residue.
- Verify chemical compatibility before applying cleaning products to the finished surface.
- Prevent cleaning chemicals from damaging adjacent materials.
- Thoroughly rinse the surface after chemical cleaning.
- Inspect the completed installation for visible grout haze and other installation-related residues.

Residual grout, mortar, adhesive, construction materials, or cleaning-product film resulting from improper or incomplete post-installation cleaning are not inherent characteristics of the porcelain tile.

The presence of installation-related residue after completion of the installation should therefore be addressed through the appropriate cleaning procedure rather than being attributed to the porcelain tile itself.

13. IMPORTANT: DO NOT

DO NOT:

- Allow grout residue to dry or cure on the tile surface when it can be removed during the recommended cleaning window.
- Use abrasive powders or aggressive abrasive tools.
- Use steel wool or metal scrapers.
- Use unapproved base-acidic or alkaline chemicals.
- Use a cement grout-haze remover on epoxy or urethane grout unless specifically approved.
- Allow cleaning chemicals to dry on the surface.
- Exceed the manufacturer's recommended concentration or dwell time.
- Mix cleaning chemicals.
- Apply a chemical cleaner to the entire installation without first verifying compatibility when required.
- Assume that a product suitable for porcelain tile is automatically suitable for adjacent metals, natural stone, grout, or other materials.

14. GENERAL PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS

Cleaning products should be selected according to the type of residue or soil being removed.

Professional products specifically formulated for porcelain tiles, ceramic tile, grout haze, epoxy residue, construction soil, and routine maintenance may be used provided that the product manufacturer confirms compatibility with the installed surface.

Examples of professional cleaning-product manufacturers include FILA Solutions USA, Custom Building Products (Aqua Mix), Rust Oleum Corp (Miracle).

The use of a specific cleaning-product brand is not mandatory unless expressly specified by the project requirements or by the cleaning-product manufacturer.

Always use the current product label, TDS, and SDS for the selected cleaning product.

15. FINAL NOTE

Proper post-installation cleaning is an integral part of successful tile installation.

Porcelain tiles are designed to provide a durable, low-maintenance finished surface; however, the final appearance and long-term performance of the installation also depend on proper installation practices, grout cleanup, removal of construction residues, and appropriate ongoing maintenance.

The installer and/or responsible cleaning contractor should complete and verify the required postinstallation cleaning before the finished floor is placed into service.

CLEANER MANUFACTURERS CONTACT INFORMATION

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