

The industry's leading tile installation magazine

MARCH 2026

TileLetter

From specs to support

The tools that
HELP YOU SUCCEED
with LATICRETE

THE
TECHNOLOGY
ISSUE

Innovations in tile
installation in 2026

ALASKAN TILE CONTRACTOR THRIVES ON

trust, excellence,
and AMPLIFYING
WOMEN
in the industry

The magazine of the National Tile Contractors Association

www.tileletter.com



#COVERINGS2026



THE GLOBAL STAGE FOR TILE & STONE

A World of Inspiration in One Iconic Setting.

Coverings 2026 is the ultimate hub for contractors and installers ready to elevate their craft and sharpen their competitive edge. Experience the natural beauty, strength, and versatility of tile and stone like never before. Then, go a step further as you explore innovative products, connect with industry leaders, and discover the tools and techniques that will define the future of installation.

- Unlock opportunities in the expanding tile and stone industry
- Boost your bottom line while elevating customer experience
- Explore innovative strategies for attracting and keeping top talent
- Stay ahead with hands-on demos of tools and techniques
- And much more!

Las Vegas, Nevada **March 30 – April 2, 2026**

REGISTER NOW AT **Coverings.com**

USE PROMO CODE: NTCA

Coverings[®]
THE GLOBAL TILE & STONE EXPERIENCE

In Every Issue

BUSINESS

12 *Building better contracts:
What every tile installer should include*

NTCA MEMBERS

30 *Alaskan tile contractor thrives on trust,
excellence, and amplifying women in
the industry*

TECHNICAL

48 *Innovations in tile installation in 2026*

54 *Ask the Experts*

Columns

ONE-TO-ONE

38 *Dal-Tile's Hilary Frank discusses market
strategy, women in leadership, and the
future of tile*

ARTISAN

60 *New tools and technology to enhance
the artisan tile setter's craft*



Feature

20 *LATICRETE International, Inc.
From specs to support—the tools that help you
succeed with LATICRETE*



SUSTAINABILITY

is built into everything we do

MAPEI's processes focus on sustaining the environment for today and tomorrow.
We call it "The 3 P's of MAPEI: People, Planet and Products"



PEOPLE

MAPEI's corporate vision, including our Code of Ethics, has always included the philosophy of sustainability.



PLANET

Our operational processes are designed to reduce our carbon footprint and maximize our environmental "handprint."



PRODUCTS

With many sustainable attributes and certifications, our products can contribute to a variety of green building standards and certification programs.



CO₂ ZERO
FULLY OFFSET IN THE ENTIRE LIFE CYCLE



For more information about our sustainability commitment, visit www.mapei.com/us/en-us/about-us/sustainability/zero

Learn More



#HealthandtheEnvironment #MAPEIusa

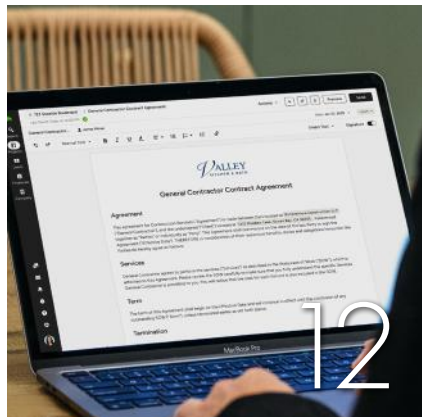


MAPEI USA



Departments

- 6 NTCA Training
- 8 Editor's Letter
- 10 President's Letter
- 65 Product Focus
- 66 News Ticker
- 67 Industry Supporters



TileLetter

TileLetter is the official monthly publication of the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA), and the industry's leading tile installation magazine.

Production:

Elena Grant, *Publisher*
elena@tile-assn.com

Lesley A. Goddin, *Editorial Director and Senior Writer*
lesley@tile-assn.com

Michelle Chapman, *Media Sales and Production Director*
michelle@tile-assn.com

Jennifer Bardoner, *Content and Production Manager*
jennifer@tile-assn.com

Scott Carothers, *Contributing Writer*
Academic Director for CTEF
scott@tilecareer.com

Barbi Phillips, *Circulation Manager*
barbi@tile-assn.com

Mailing Address:

PO Box 13629
Jackson MS 39236

Shipping Address:

216 Avalon Circle, Ste B
Flowood, MS 39232
Tel: 601-939-2071
Fax: 601-932-6117

Websites:

www.tileletter.com
www.tile-assn.com



NTCA would not be possible without the dedicated service of our volunteer board and committee members, and regional and state directors. You can find information and a continually-updated list of NTCA Five-Star Accredited Contractors and NTCA Members at www.tile-assn.com – click on Find a Tile Contractor, a Five-Star Accredited Contractor or a Tile Consultant.

TILELETTER EDITORIAL POLICY: TileLetter is the official publication of the National Tile Contractors Association, Inc. (NTCA) and provides a medium for expressing views and opinions without approving, disapproving, or guaranteeing the validity or accuracy of any data, claim or opinion appearing under a byline, or obtained or quoted from an acknowledged source. Statements of fact and opinion are made on the responsibility of the authors alone and do not imply an opinion or reflect the official position of NTCA.

The National Tile Contractors Association, Inc. is an equal opportunity association and seeks to include qualified individuals and businesses in all phases of its activities. The National Tile Contractors Association, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, veteran status, or disability. The National Tile Contractors Association, Inc. seeks opportunities to include these groups in its programs and activities.

SPONSORED INSTALLER TESTING.

A program for Coverings **2026**
24 Tests
8 Per Day Over **3** Days

Reserved for
Annual Sponsors

24, 25K+

Each year, over 25,000 industry professionals attend Coverings. This year, we want them to see 24 installers supported by the industry, but we need your help

In 2026, CTEF will conduct Certified Tile Installer (CTI) testing live on the show floor—providing sponsors a direct way to invest in workforce development while maintaining the integrity of ANSI-aligned certification.

Testing at trade shows requires additional staffing, logistics, and materials. This sponsorship program ensures installers receive a professional, well-supported testing experience while sponsors gain meaningful visibility and impact.

Sponsor benefits include:

- Directly supporting Certified Tile Installer (CTI) testing
- Recognition at the CTI testing area during Coverings 2026
- Acknowledgment through CTEF website, email, social media, and TileLetter
- Alignment with workforce development and industry standards
- Visibility in front of installers, contractors, manufacturers, and distributors

About CTEF

The Ceramic Tile Education Foundation (CTEF) is the tile industry's leading provider of education, training, and certification. CTEF administers the Certified Tile Installer (CTI) program to validate installer skills through hands-on, performance-based testing aligned with industry standards. CTEF programs support installers, contractors, manufacturers, and the industry as a whole by elevating installation quality and professionalism.

CTEF

Ceramic Tile Education Foundation

- Qualified Labor • Certification •
- Tile Industry Recognized •

2026 Certified Tile Installer Testing at Coverings 2026



\$1,200 PER
INSTALLER

OR

\$8,500 PER
DAY

INSTALLERS

- First come first serve for a sponsored test and will be limited to the number of sponsors signed up
- \$200 deposit required
- Upon attendance, you will receive a \$400 gift card
- Showcase your skills by putting them to the test
- Join "Qualified Labor"

EMPOWER YOUR INSTALLERS

CTEF's CTI Sponsorship Program helps remove financial barriers while preserving the professionalism and accountability of certification.

Employers are encouraged to participate. Sponsors and companies may support individual installers—or help bring an entire crew to test—demonstrating a commitment to quality, training, and long-term workforce development.*

**Installer participation requires a \$200 commitment deposit to secure a testing slot. Deposit is reimbursed to sponsored installers as part of the program.*



Meet the 2026 NTCA Training Team



Matt Weiner
Training Department
Manager



Randy Fleming



Chad Jones



Kate Koerber



Bill O'Connor



Amber Fox
Director of Strategic
Initiatives



Anthony Oliver



Robb Roderick



Alex Smith

2026 NTCA Workshop Programs *

To confirm dates and for more information visit NTCATraining.com

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>APRIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Floor & Decor – Cincinnati, OH 14 Floor & Decor – Draper, UT 14 Floor & Decor – Mooresville, NC 15 Daltile – Greensboro, NC 16 Daltile – Morrisville, NC 20 Daltile – La Vista, NE 21 D&B Tile – Hialeah, FL 21 Daltile – Maspeth, NY 21 Floor & Decor – Wichita, KS 22 D&B Tile – Sunrise, FL 23 Daltile – Arlington, TX 23 Floor & Decor – Naples, FL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 Texas Tile Supply – Abilene, TX 28 Floor & Decor – Arlington Heights, IL 29 MSI – Indianapolis, IN 29 Floor & Decor – San Antonio, TX 30 Emser Tile – Nashville, TN 30 Floor & Decor – San Antonio, TX <p>MAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 James Hardie – TBD, NJ 5 Floor & Decor – Katy, TX 18 Floor & Decor – Arlington, TX 19 Floor & Decor – Alexandria, VA 19 Floor & Decor – Oxnard, CA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19 The Tile Shop – Dallas, TX 20 Floor & Decor – Moreno Valley, CA 20 Floor & Decor – Whitehall, PA 21 Emser Tile – Las Vegas, NV 21 Daltile – Broomfield, CO 21 Floor & Decor – Fairfield, CT 26 James Hardie – Denver, CO 26 Daltile – Grapevine, TX 27 Daltile – North Little Rock, AR 28 Daltile – Tontitown, AR 28 Daltile – Davenport, IA |
|--|---|---|

2026 NTCA Regional Programs *

Register online at NTCATraining.com

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>APRIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Floor & Decor – Silver Spring, MD 2 Daltile – Seattle, WA 9 Floor & Decor – Lewis Center, OH 9 Floor & Decor – Riverdale, UT 16 Daltile – Bedford Heights, OH 16 United Tile – Orange, CA 23 Crossville Studios OKC – Oklahoma City, OK 23 Floor & Decor – Dorchester, MA 28 Floor & Decor – McKinney, TX 30 Wayne Tile Company – Wayne, NJ 30 Caesarstone – Pompano Beach, FL | <p>MAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Garden State Tile – Lancaster, PA 7 Uzin Utz – Waco, TX 12 Floor & Decor – Woodbridge, VA 14 BPI – San Antonio, TX 21 Floor & Decor – Louisville, KY 21 Floor & Decor – Webster, TX 28 Daltile – St. Louis, MO |
|--|--|



NTCA maintains an ongoing list of training events through an interactive map on its website. Check it out by scanning.



**Dates are subject to change*

Industry Supporters

of the 2026 NTCA Workshops and NTCA Regional Programs



A News evolution
with the goal of flexibility,
innovation and energy efficiency.

PATENTED

TERMOSTAT KIT CABLE

PRODESO HEAT GRIP 5 & STICK SYSTEM

Designed and patented by Progress Profiles, PRODESO HEAT GRIP 5 is an **innovative electric floor and wall heating system** that quickly and cost-effectively creates a pleasantly warm and comfortable environment. Easy and quick to install in any type of environment, it requires no maintenance over time.

FUNCTIONS

UNCOUPLING WATERPROOFING VAPOUR MANAGEMENT LOAD DISTRIBUTION

Filiale /Branch Office & Warehouse
Progress Profiles America Inc.
 750 Veterans Pkwy,
 Bolingbrook, Illinois 60440
 U.S.A
 Tel. 1 973 584 2650
 usa@progressprofiles.com



Corporate: Progress Profiles SpA
 Certified company UNI EN ISO 9001:2015

40
 1986-2025
 ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating SPRING, TECHNOLOGY, and GIRL POWER

"I am thankful that in a troubled world no calamity can prevent the return of spring."

– HELEN KELLER



Lesley Goddin

Welcome to March, the season of spring, more daylight, and stirrings of new life!

Our issue this month has a dual focus—an emphasis on technology that can streamline your workflow, and a look at some of the women who are making major inroads and impacts in our industry.

One of those women is Hilary Frank, Vice President of Commercial Sales and Business Development at Daltile and NTCA Board Member. Read more about her career path in Bart Bettiga's One-to-One story.

Tile contractor Rachel Overby of R&R Tile and Renovations in Anchorage, Alaska, has built a thriving business based on trust, excellence, and amplifying women in the industry. She also earned her CTI#1980 last March at the All-Women's CTI test on International Women's Day. Meet her in our Member Feature.

Our technology content starts with our cover feature from LATICRETE that outlines many of the offerings and resources the company offers the contractor. From there, hop on over to our Business story penned by Jihan Spearman, who is Director, Associate General Counsel at Houzz, Inc. She discusses what every tile installer needs to know and include in their contracts, and how Houzz Pro's Contracts features can help.

In his Technical story, CTEF's Scott Carothers explores innovations in the tile industry—from AI software to tools, to systems that streamline tile projects. And the NTCA Technical Team brings its wisdom about drilling into glass and successful

garage tile installations to the Ask the Expert section.

In the practice of the tile setting craft, technology can help tile setters bridge the gap between concept and execution. Read about the experiences and wisdom from tile artisans who use software, machinery, and other technologies to bring their clients' dreams to fruition.

NTCA President Rod Owen wraps up his Business Acumen Series with an exploration of Ethical Acumen: what it is, why it's important, and how to employ it in your business.

At the end of this month, the tile industry will descend on the Las Vegas Convention Center for Coverings, the ultimate tile expo and experience for North America. Whether you go for the new tile and accessory products, the education, the networking, the demos, the awards and all the other activities, just be sure you go! It takes place March 30–April 2. Look for the NTCA and *TileLetter* teams at booth #4070, and everywhere on the show floor. Scan the code at the right for more information.

Looking forward to seeing you in Vegas!

God bless,

lesley@tile-assn.com



Coverings 2026

*ICYMI: Our print February Business story on Partnering for Success stated the over \$8,000 voucher benefit was only available for existing members. But, after the issue went to print, the decision was made to provide the \$8,000 voucher benefit to ALL members -- nearly 11.5 times the membership fee! Visit the digital February issue of *TileLetter*, page 32, for an update.*



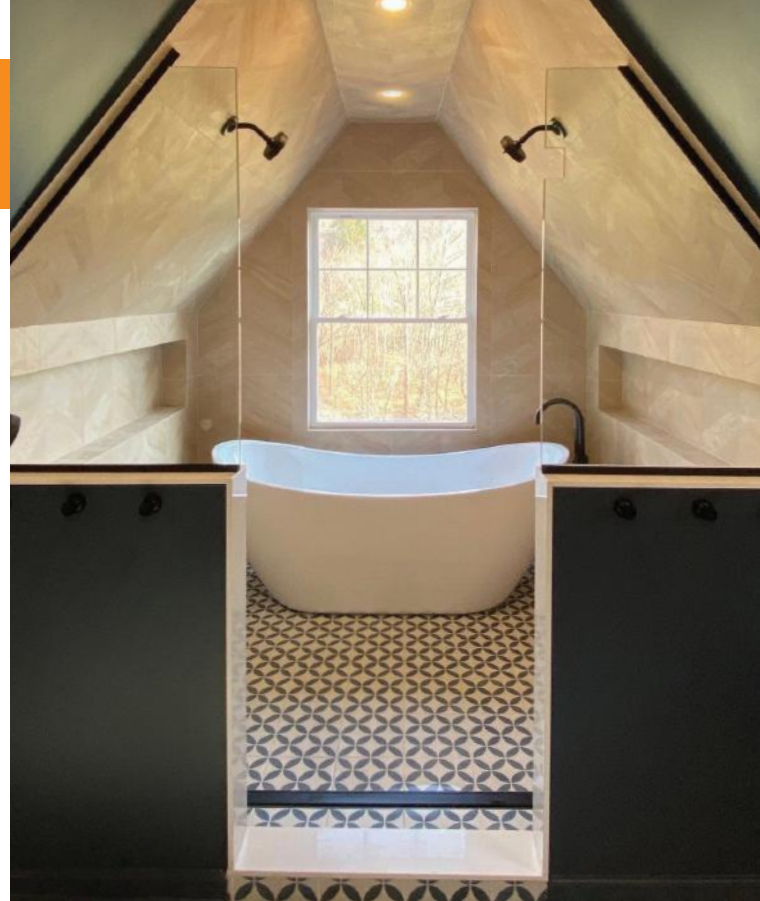
Setting the Standard

Mike Greenwalt Jr., owner of Custom Concepts by Greenwalt, has spent more than two decades perfecting his craft in tile installation, building a reputation for precision, quality, and attention to detail. Based in Maryland, Mike launched his business in 2005 and has grown it into a tight-knit team of seven, with several employees who have been with him for over a decade. "It's a solid crew," he says. "We work really well together and try to keep the same level of quality across the board."

Coming from a family of tradespeople, Mike began installing tile at 15 and quickly realized his talent for the craft. He's made it his mission to uphold high standards, an approach recognized with a 2018 Coverings award for The Slate House of Maryland. His business spans mid-range to high-end custom homes, often tackling intricate details like marble, natural stone, large-format porcelain slabs, and custom borders. "A lot of contractors will do their own tile, but when it comes to the master bath or areas with heavy detail, they bring us in. That's the work I really enjoy," he notes.

Mike began using Schluter products nearly a decade ago after discovering them through Chesapeake Tile in Baltimore. Since then, they've become a mainstay in his projects, providing both reliability and peace of mind. "What's under the tile matters just as much as what you see," he emphasizes, especially when using linear drains and waterproofing solutions like KERDI-BOARD.

One recent project showcased Mike's expertise in a challenging second-floor, attic-like space, where waterproofing was critical. Its unique shape made floor coverage tricky, so he used DITRA membrane for its easy-to-cut design, which simplified installation while providing reliable protection. The area included a tub and shower, requiring careful slopes toward a matte-black KERDI-LINE linear drain and meticulous waterproofing. "We floated a mud pan



"What's under the tile matters just as much as what you see. We KERDI-BAND everything and treat the space as a full wet room. We take our time to get it right – speed comes second to quality."

and made sure the slope was perfect toward the drain. Even in a flat area, this ensures water goes exactly where it should," he explains.

The shower included a window, which was a tricky detail. Mike likes using a flexible adhesive in these spots, and KERDI-FIX came in handy to solve the challenge perfectly. He adds, "We KERDI-BAND everything and treat the space as a full wet room. We take our time to get it right – speed comes second to quality."

Mike credits Schluter not only for its innovative products but also for the support they provide. "They're always coming out with new products that make the job easier. The staff knows what they're doing," he laughs. He also stresses practical advice for builders: waterproof utility areas like mudrooms and laundry rooms – little investments upfront that can prevent major headaches later.

With a blend of technical skill, a dedicated team, and a commitment to high-quality craftsmanship, Mike Greenwalt Jr. continues to set a standard for tile installation in Maryland. Whether handling complex custom homes or award-winning designs, he keeps quality at the forefront, proving that excellence is built from the ground up, one tile at a time.





Rod Owen

BUSINESS ACUMEN SERIES: ETHICAL ACUMEN



March brings us to the Spring Equinox, the official start of spring and a good reminder that we're moving into a busy and productive season, a season of renewal and growth. It's an appropriate time to pause, reflect, and consider how we move forward, both in our businesses and as leaders in this industry.

This month also marks the final installment of our Ten Essential Business Acumen Series. Over the past year, we've worked through Financial, Market, Technological, Leadership, Strategic, Negotiation, Risk Management, Problem-Solving, and People Management Acumen. Each one plays a role in building strong, resilient businesses. But there's one that ties them all together: Ethical Acumen.

Ethical Acumen is about understanding and adhering to ethical principles and standards in business practices. It's how decisions are made when no one's watching, when the answer isn't easy, or when taking a shortcut might seem tempting. In our trade, ethics show up every day—in how we bid work, how we write and honor contracts, how we treat our people, how we handle mistakes, and how we stand behind our workmanship.

Strong Ethical Acumen builds trust: trust with clients, trust with employees, trust with partners, and trust within our industry. It doesn't always produce the fastest result, but it consistently produces the right one. Over time, ethical behavior becomes a competitive advantage, shaping reputation, strengthening relationships, and creating businesses built to last.

Ethics start at the top. Leaders set the tone. When standards are clear and integrity is non-negotiable, teams know what's expected and how decisions

will be made. That consistency creates confidence, accountability, and pride in the work.

That brings us directly into *TileLetter's* focus this month: technology.

Technology continues to reshape how we operate, from estimating software and digital layouts to automation, AI tools, and advanced jobsite systems. These tools can improve efficiency, accuracy, and communication, but they also demand ethical responsibility. Using technology honestly, protecting data, training teams properly, and maintaining transparency all matter. Technology should support craftsmanship and professionalism, not replace integrity or accountability. Ethical Acumen ensures that as technology advances, our values stay grounded.

Next month, we'll do a short reflection on all Ten Business Acumen skills. Summarizing them in one article will be a challenge, but the focus will be on bringing them together in a way that reinforces their importance to leadership and sustainable business growth.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing many of you at Coverings 2026 in Las Vegas March 30–April 2.

It's a great opportunity to learn, connect, and continue moving our industry forward together.

Until next time, lead with integrity, stay balanced, and as always, Educate for Excellence!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod".

Rod Owen
NTCA President
rod.owen@ccowen.us

Introducing CUSTOM'S Most Versatile Mortar Yet!

VERSABOND[®] HP

NEW!



HIGH PERFORMANCE LARGE AND HEAVY TILE MORTAR

- Superior bond for large and heavy tiles
- Non-sag on walls, non-slump on floors
- Exceeds ANSI 118.15HET and ISO 13007 C2TES1P1 rated
- Superior workability — Smooth and creamy formula provides easy handling



Scan this to learn more about VersaBond HP!

DOWNLOAD CUSTOM'S MOBILE APP



Available at The Home Depot and tile distributors nationwide.

CustomBuildingProducts.com
800-272-8786

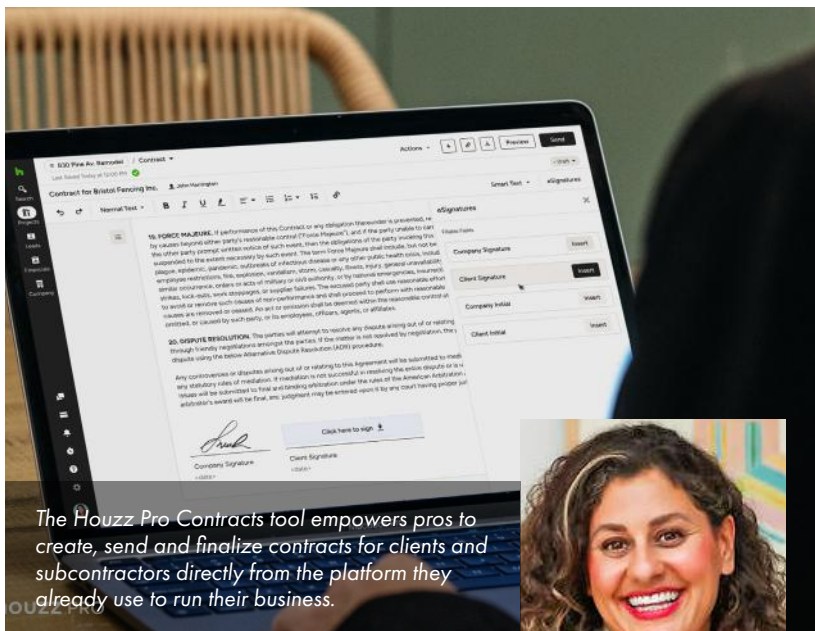


CUSTOM[®]

A QUIKRETE[®] COMPANY

BUILDING BETTER CONTRACTS:

What every tile installer should include



The Houzz Pro Contracts tool empowers pros to create, send and finalize contracts for clients and subcontractors directly from the platform they already use to run their business.



By: Jihan Spearman, Houzz Director, Associate General Counsel

A clear, well-structured service agreement is one of the most effective tools a tile installer can use to protect their business. Some of the most common and costly issues contractors face, from substrate disputes to scope changes, can stem from contracts that were unclear, incomplete, or never properly finalized.

Wondering where to start with your next contract? Technology can help. Contract features within Houzz Pro project management and design software empower professionals to create, send, and finalize agreements with clients and other trades directly from the same platform they already use to run their business, eliminating the need for third-party tools. Scan here for an overview of what Houzz Pro Contracts offers:



While every contractor, regardless of trade, should include certain core terms in their contracts, tile installation carries unique technical and legal risks that require additional trade-specific provisions. A strong agreement addresses both, clearly defining expectations, allocating risk, and helping ensure that a successful installation doesn't turn into an expensive dispute.

Six essential contract provisions every contractor should have

Every tile installation contract should include the same universal contract elements required across service industries, forming the backbone of any enforceable agreement. These typically include:

- 1. Detailed scope of work:** A comprehensive scope of work is the most important part of any tile contract. It spells out exactly what work will—and will not—be performed. This includes clearly defined areas (rooms, walls, floors or surfaces) to be tiled, along with square footage or linear measurements, and any patterns, borders or design features. It should identify who is responsible for providing materials and clearly list tile type, thinset, grout, membranes and underlayment, as well as any brand preferences or substitution allowances.

The scope should also address demolition and preparation work, such as removal of existing flooring or wall finishes, subfloor or wall repairs, and surface cleaning or priming. Installation details should be described as well, including layout plans, tile orientation, grout joint width, patterns, decorative elements, edge treatment and finishing standards. It's important to define completion criteria, including what constitutes a finished project, acceptable tolerances for lippage or surface flatness, and grout curing and sealing expectations.

Finally, the scope should address cleanup and

Faster to install than regular GoBoard, with less irritation and it's approved for steam showers.



GoBoard[®] PRO
JM Johns Manville
A Berkshire Hathaway Company



- Ultra lightweight
- Easy to cut, handle & install
- Waterproof built-in

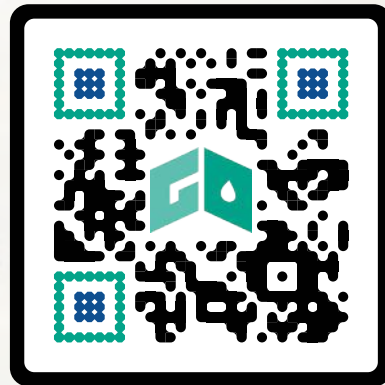
2024041810173

2024041810173

Walls, Showers, Steam Showers,
Ceilings, Floors and Countertops

4-ft x 64-in 1/2-in 0.43-in

www.jm.com/GoBoard



BUILT FOR STEAM

INDUSTRY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



Keraflex® Membrane Mortar

Premium, Extra Smooth, Large-and-Heavy Tile Mortar with Polymer for Membranes

MAPEI's Keraflex Membrane Mortar is a highly versatile, nonsag/nonslump, large-and-heavy-tile mortar and thin-set mortar for installing uncoupling, waterproofing, floor-heating and sound-reduction membranes and for tile and stone installations on floors, walls and countertops. This polymer-modified mortar has unique performance-enhancing additives that result in excellent adhesion to the substrate and tile, and resistance to freeze/thaw environments. It is formulated with Easy Glide Technology™ for ease of application, and it has a consistency that allows adjustability when used with lippage control systems. Keraflex Membrane Mortar is designed for use as a mortar over and, when appropriate, under uncoupling, crack-isolation, sound-reduction and waterproofing membranes. For more information, scan.



Built-in eSignatures within the Houzz Pro Contracts tool enables fast, secure digital signing from any device.

- debris removal ownership, and any special conditions or client responsibilities related to property access, on-site storage and power and water availability.
- 2. Pricing, deposits and payment terms:** The contract should state the total estimated cost, required deposit, and payment schedule. It should identify circumstances that may result in additional charges, such as subfloor damage, leveling issues, or material substitutions. This helps the client manage their budget while protecting the installer if unforeseen work arises.
- 3. Change-order procedure:** Any change from the original scope should require a written change order signed by both parties. This ensures tile installers are paid for extra work and helps clients understand the cost and schedule impact of changes in advance.
- 4. Scheduling and project timeline:** Including estimated start and completion dates helps manage expectations and clarifies how delays outside the installer's control, such as product shortages, customer-supplied materials, or access issues, will be handled.
- 5. Warranty and liability limitations:** Contracts should include a workmanship warranty with reasonable liability limitations, clearly stating exclusions, such as structural movement, existing moisture problems, or manufacturer defects.
- 6. Insurance and licensing:** A general statement confirming that the installer carries appropriate insurance and holds required licenses (if applicable) helps build trust and ensures compliance with local laws.

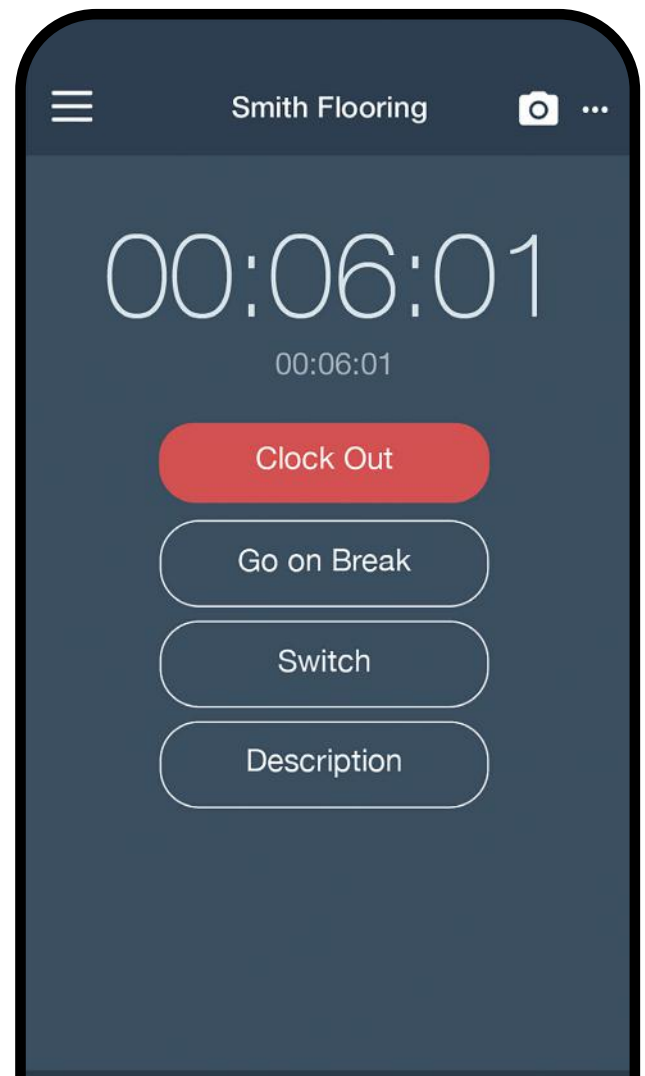
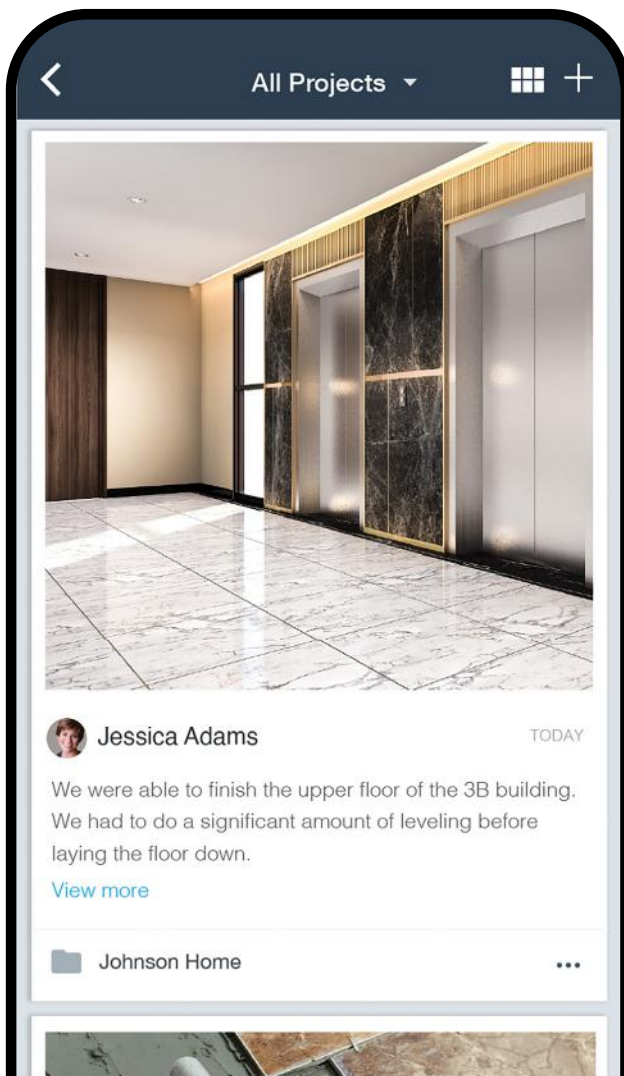
Job Costing
GPS Time Tracking
Budgeting

Daily Sign Off
Team Messaging
Photos and Videos

RECOMMENDED BY NTCA

Mobile time tracking for tile contractors

Track time with GPS, manage crews, and get daily project reports—all from your phone. Make your scheduling, job costing, and documentation easy with web and mobile apps. Simplify your workflow and stay on budget with one powerful tool. Built by contractors for contractors.



Six tile-specific provisions that protect installers and customers

Because tile installation involves specialized materials, precise tolerances, and conditions beyond an installer's control, a strong service agreement should address risks unique to tile work.

- 1. Substrate conditions and cracking:** Contracts should explain that tile requires a stable, properly prepared substrate. They should state that cracking or failure caused by structural movement, temperature changes, or environmental factors are not covered under the installer's warranty unless the issue results from improper installation. Addressing this up front helps set expectations and reduce disputes over conditions beyond the installer's control.
- 2. Lippage expectations:** Because national standards allow for minor lippage, contracts should define acceptable tolerances. Contracts should note that perfectly flush surfaces may not be achievable, especially in older homes with uneven subfloors.
- 3. Waterproofing responsibilities:** To avoid costly disputes, contracts should specify waterproofing responsibilities, what system will be used, and what is (and is not) covered under the installer's warranty. Make sure they clarify that installers do not warrant the performance of systems specified by the client or designer.
- 4. Mold and moisture disclosure:** If moisture, rot, or mold is found during demolition, work may need to pause until the underlying issue is resolved. Contracts should state that installers are not

responsible for hidden or pre-existing conditions.

- 5. Licensing and code compliance:** In some regions, tile installers need specific licenses or certifications to pull permits or work on wet areas. The contract should clarify whether permits are required and who is responsible for obtaining them.
- 6. Joint liability for customer-supplied materials:** If the customer purchases their own tile or setting materials, the contract should limit the installer's liability for product defects, shade variations, or delays caused by backorders or shortages. This protects contractors from issues beyond their control while ensuring clients understand the risks associated with owner-furnished materials.

Contract specifics for residential and commercial installers

Contract needs may vary based on the size and focus of a tile business. Large commercial contractors often require more detailed agreements addressing multi-phase scheduling, coordination with multiple trades, retainage and extended payment terms, while smaller residential installers typically benefit from streamlined contracts focused on scope, change orders, and payment expectations.

A well-crafted service agreement protects both the installer and the client by clearly outlining responsibilities, expectations and risk, regardless of project size. Beyond standard contract elements like payment, timelines and liability, tile installers should address trade-specific considerations such as substrate stability, lippage tolerances, waterproofing, mold, licensing, and coordination with other trades. Documenting these



A comprehensive scope of work is the most important part of any tile contract. It spells out exactly what work will (and will not) be performed. This includes clearly defined areas to be tiled, along with square footage or linear measurements, and any patterns, borders or design features.

Engine™



engine.com

Every work trip. One platform. No contracts.

Earn \$1,000 in travel credits when you spend \$2,500 within the first 90 days.



Terms and conditions regarding the issuance, use, and expiration of travel credits is located at: <https://engine.com/terms-of-service>

■ BUSINESS

details up front reduces the likelihood of disputes, reinforces professional standards, and gives clients a clear understanding of the scope and limitations of the work.

Learn more about Houzz Contracts here:



Disclaimer: This article is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Laws vary by jurisdiction and Houzz makes no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy, completeness, or suitability of this information. You assume all responsibility for any actions taken based on this content and should consult a qualified attorney. **TL**

Jihan Spearman is the Founder and Principal Designer of Spearman Spaces and Director, Associate General Counsel at Houzz, Inc., a leading construction and design software platform. Her career brings together 13 years of experience as a technology attorney with a deeply intuitive design practice. Known for crafting interiors that are both visually striking and emotionally resonant, she approaches projects with the precision of a lawyer



While every contractor, regardless of trade, should include certain core terms in their contracts, tile installation carries unique technical and legal risks that require additional, trade-specific provisions.

and the curiosity of a creative. Her work across both fields reflects an execution-driven mindset, a love of experimentation, and a belief that aesthetics and ethics belong in the everyday. Learn more about Spearman Spaces here:



Your reputation is only as good as your last installation. Stay ahead of the curve and protect your bottom line with free workshop and regional training from the NTCA. Our expert-led sessions provide the hands-on instruction you need to master the latest industry standards, from advanced substrate preparation to the newest waterproofing technologies. Learn to navigate complex materials and avoid the common mistakes that lead to costly callbacks. Invest a few hours in your craft today to secure your success for tomorrow.

Register for FREE at NTCATraining.com

Take a fresh approach to shipping.

As a member of NTCA, you can save big!

NTCA members can receive discounted shipping rates on eligible services. Sign up for the FedEx Advantage® discounts program for free to start saving on eligible services.

With the FedEx Advantage program, you'll save up to:*

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| 45% off | FedEx Express® shipping |
| 25% off | FedEx Ground® shipping |
| 25% off | FedEx Home Delivery® |

It's free to sign up using your FedEx account number, and there are no quotas or commitments. Typically, your FedEx discounts will be available 7 to 10 business days after you join the FedEx Advantage program.

To enroll, go to PartnerShip.com/NTCA-FedEx



FedEx
Advantage®
Discounts

* FedEx shipping discounts are off standard list rates and cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. Discounts are exclusive of any FedEx surcharges, premiums, minimums, accessorials, or special handling fees. Eligible services and discounts subject to change. For eligible FedEx® services and rates, please call 1.800.GoFedEx 1.800.463.3339. See the applicable FedEx Service Guide for terms and conditions of service offers and money-back guarantee programs.

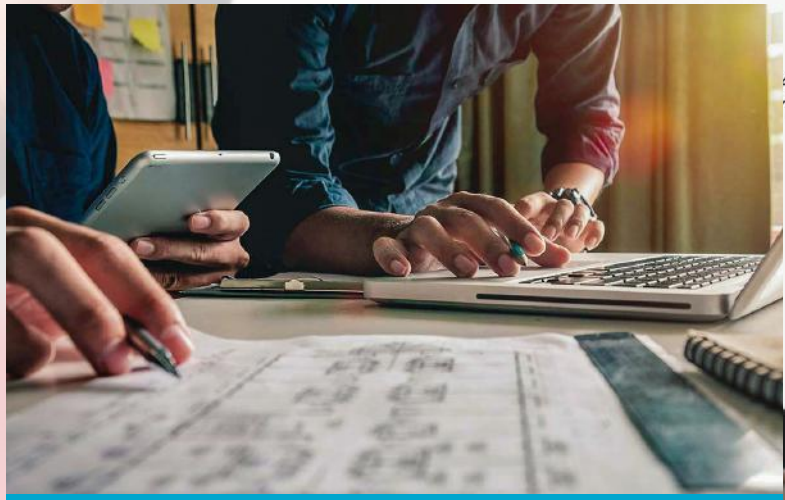
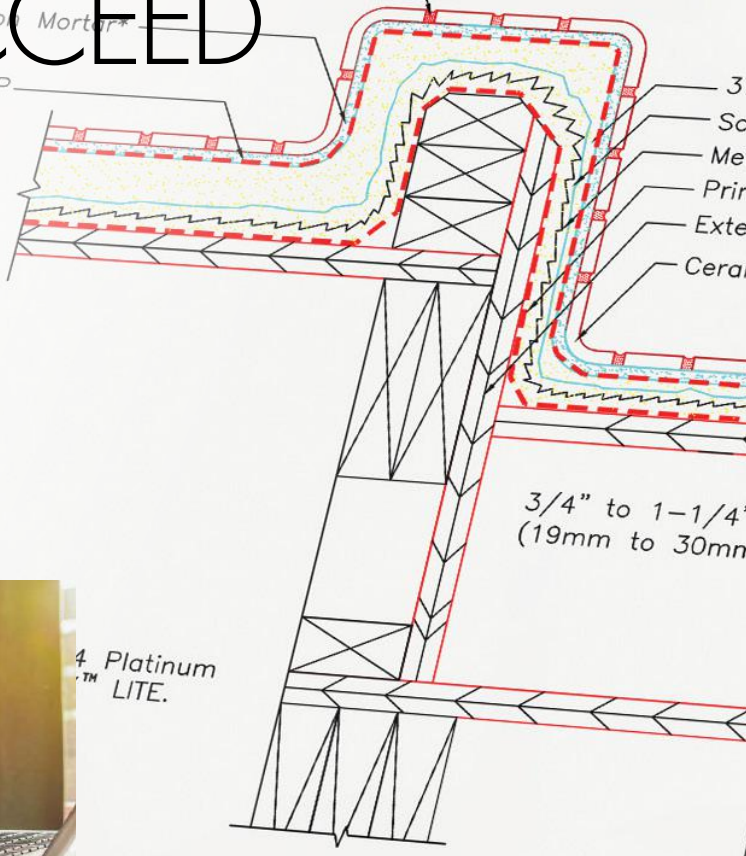


From specs to support

The tools that HELP YOU SUCCEED with LATICRETE



SPECTRALOCK® PRO Premium Grout; or,
PERMACOLOR® Select
Tile Installation Mortar
HYDRO BAN® XP

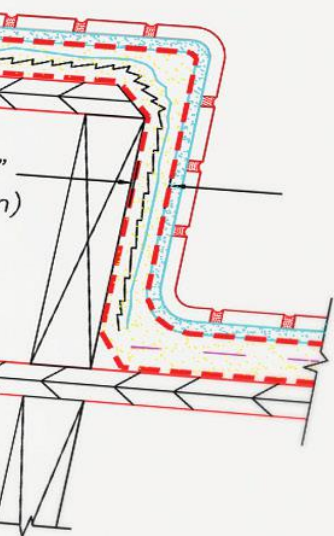


Teams can easily access a comprehensive document library with product information, warranty details, and more. (Credit: LATICRETE)

Revision D
(C)2023 LATICRETE
LATICRETE DETAILS
ARCHITECTS, QUANTITY
TRADEMARKS SHOWN

Drawing No. ES B417B

701 Fortified Mortar
 Scratch Coat
 Metal Lath
 Primary Membrane
 Superior Glue Plywood
 Ceramic Tile or Stone



Date: 5/23 Scale: N.T.S.

INTERNATIONAL, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THE RIGHT TO UTILIZE FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES IS GRANTED EXCLUSIVELY TO CONTRACTORS, ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND SPECIFICATIONS WRITERS. ALL RIGHTS ARE THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES OF THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS.

LATICRETE leads in technical support, providing specific CAD detail drawings for a clear, straightforward installation. (Credit: LATICRETE)

Time matters. Accuracy matters. Both large-scale commercial builds and fast-paced residential renovations share these needs. That's why LATICRETE has developed a full suite of digital tools and resources that not only support product usage, but also help streamline workflows from planning to project completion.

From specification writing to LEED documentation and technical education, these solutions are designed to give architects, engineers, contractors, distributors, and installers immediate access to the information they need, exactly when they need it. The LATICRETE professional community is invited to use these complimentary tools for seamless project execution.

A smarter starting point: the Document Library

The LATICRETE Document Library is your centralized hub for product intelligence and planning. Whether you're looking for technical data sheets, design manuals, warranty information, or certifications like UL GREENGUARD, Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), or Health Product Declarations (HPDs), they all live here in a searchable, organized, and frequently updated spot. This is also where you'll find installation guidelines and real-world project spotlights that showcase how LATICRETE solutions perform in the field. Check out the LATICRETE Document Library:



Specification writing, simplified: the Architectural Guidebook

Creating submittal packages and design details does not need to be a time-consuming effort. With the Architectural Guidebook, professionals can download complete specification packages, CAD drawings, BIM objects, and other project-ready assets. This guidebook is an essential tool for architects, designers, and spec writers looking to



LATICRETE technical support is offered as a complimentary service for large and small projects. (Credit: LATICRETE)

integrate LATICRETE systems early in the design phase—or distributors and contractors looking to easily generate document submittal packages before or at the time of install—and to do so with confidence and clarity. Just search by project application or TCNA method, or download the LATICRETE Master Specifications. Dive into the Architectural Guidebook:



Green building? LATICRETE’s got you covered

LATICRETE’s LEED Project Certification Assistant provides quick access to everything needed for sustainability submittals, including EPDs, HPDs, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) data, and other documentation to help meet LEED project goals. This free tool is designed to help you simplify projects aiming to achieve various green building certifications, by bundling necessary documentation and creating downloadable submittal packages. Leverage LATICRETE’s LEED Project Certification Assistant:



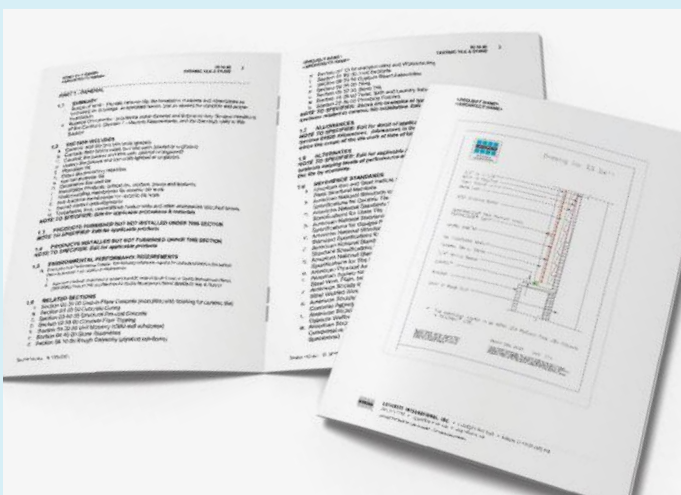
Fast, accurate estimates

Input your project details and receive precise product quantity recommendations based on your chosen LATICRETE system. The Project Estimator helps contractors, designers, and distributors reduce material waste, plan for accurate ordering, and improve bidding accuracy. Select your product, input coverage details like total area, trowel size, tile size, and more, and generate estimates with a single click. Simplify your planning and estimating processes with the Project Estimator:



Plan floor heating installations with confidence

Planning for radiant floor heating installations is made simple with the STRATA_HEAT® Floor Warming Layout Tool, which lets you design custom room layouts and determine exactly how much material you need. Whether you’re heating a bathroom, a kitchen, or an entire residential floor plan, this tool helps eliminate guesswork and ensures every cable, mat, and sensor is accounted for. Plan your custom floor heating installation with ease:



Technical datasheets and architectural illustrations are available to ensure products are used properly and in the correct order. (Credit: LATICRETE)



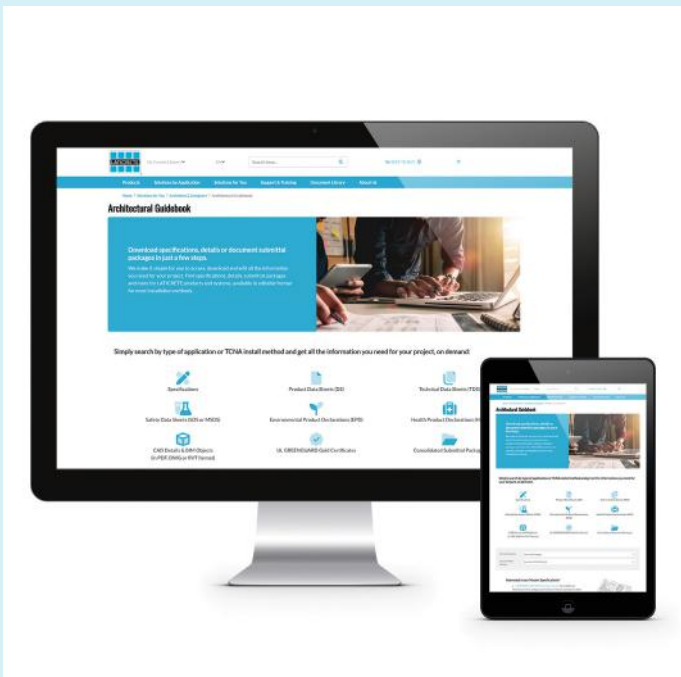
TILETV

Keep your skills sharp with monthly episodes featuring technical tips and the latest news from across the industry.

TileTV is made possible through the generous sponsorship of our industry partners. Their ongoing support allows us to deliver high-quality content to our viewers. We are incredibly grateful for their partnership and shared commitment to elevating the NTCA TileTV experience for our entire community.



Visit YouTube at /c/NationalTileContractorsAssociation



Specification details, submittal packages, and more are all available on demand to keep project timelines moving forward. (Credit: LATICRETE)



LATICRETE University is your source for official installation tips and details from the experts. (Credit: LATICRETE)

Training, on your time

LATICRETE University offers on-demand, self-paced learning for everyone from new hires to seasoned professionals. Whether you're brushing up on product knowledge or new installation methods or completing distributor onboarding or 101 courses, these modules are designed for real-world jobsite needs that can be accessed anytime, anywhere. Choose from more than 150 unique courses:



Real people. Real support. Real community

Behind every LATICRETE product is a dedicated team ready to help you get the job done right. Whether you need application guidance, system recommendations, or help tracking down specific documentation, LATICRETE technical support teams are available to assist with prompt, knowledgeable service online, over the phone, or in the field.

But support goes beyond one-on-one help. The LATICRETE community is active and accessible across multiple social media platforms. That's where you'll find

real-world project inspiration, product tips, and behind-the-scenes content. Join the conversation yourself or share your work by tagging @laticrete or @laticretecanada and using #laticrete. For even more direct access, professionals can join the private Inside Track Facebook group created exclusively for industry insiders. This is a dedicated space for sharing ideas, getting answers from peers, and staying connected to new product releases and company updates. Find LATICRETE on social channels:



Stay ahead with new product innovation

Innovation is at the core of the LATICRETE identity. Whether it's introducing next-generation adhesive mortars, waterproofing systems, surface preparation solutions, or tools that simplify installations, new product development is driven by the evolving needs of the industry.

Professionals can explore the latest product innovations, as well as a full archive of past launches, to stay up to date on performance enhancements, new formulations,

ALPHA



BLACK BELT Wet Cutting System

- Professional Quality Rail Saw for Large Format Tiles
- Best Turbo Rim Tile Blade on the Market
- Designed for Cutting Quartzite/ Granite and Porcelain Paver Tiles



* Shown with optional 8-Roller Side Table and Side Counter-cut accessories

 **Alpha Professional Tools**

16 Park Dr Ste 9, Franklin, NJ 07416 • 800-648-7229
www.alpha-tools.com

Copyright © 2025 Alpha Professional Tools. All rights reserved.





When print materials are preferred, LATICRETE offers a wide assortment of physical catalogs and product guides. (Credit: LATICRETE)

and extended system options. Start here for an overview of new offerings and access specific product pages featuring technical data, certifications, installation guidance, and additional support materials—all to easily assess how these new solutions can benefit your next job. Stay informed with every launch, all in one place:



request portal. Professionals can order samples, catalogs, brochures, flyers, and more. This is also where you can download digital versions of LATICRETE marketing literature on demand. Request what you need, when you need it:



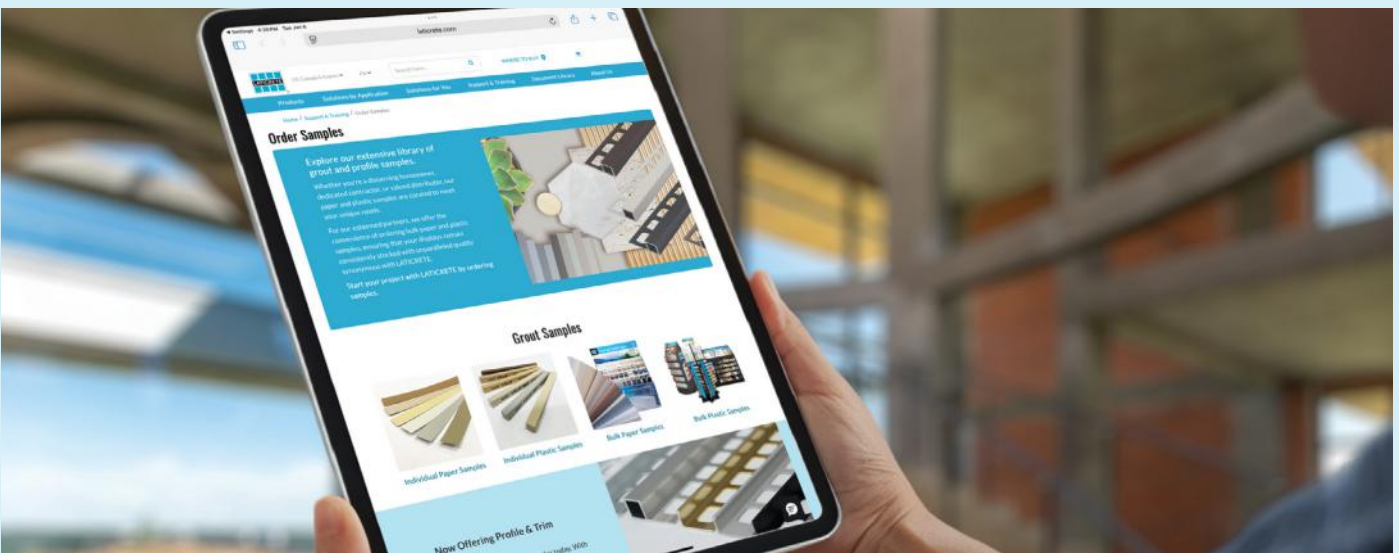
Request samples and literature

Need printed catalogs, brochures, or physical product samples? LATICRETE makes it simple to get materials sent directly to your office, showroom, or jobsite. Whether you're building out a resource library or need physical samples for submittals or approvals, samples and literature are easily accessible through LATICRETE's online

Wherever you work, LATICRETE has your back

Whether you're on a jobsite, at the drafting table, or finalizing a spec package, LATICRETE solutions are built to support the way you work. These digital resources are designed to remove obstacles, save time, and give you confidence in your product choices and project planning.

Supporting professionals is how LATICRETE continues to set the standard. **TL**



Samples of many LATICRETE products can be ordered for in-person inspection and comparison. (Credit: LATICRETE)

NTCA Total Health & Wellness Benefits Program

The National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) provides exclusive, cost-saving programs designed to support the success and growth of tile professionals nationwide. Among the many valuable benefits available to NTCA members is the NTCA Total Health & Wellness Benefits Program. This comprehensive program is dedicated to promoting the well-being of our members and their teams. Discover how NTCA can enhance your business and help you thrive!

LEARN MORE! 

Meridio



NATIONAL TILE CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

NTCA REFERENCE MANUAL


In conjunction with the NTCA Technical Committee members, industry allies, and ceramic tile contractors, distributors, and manufacturers, we produce the *NTCA Reference Manual*. One of the most highly-valued tile industry documents, this manual identifies recurring installation challenges, recognizes potential problems, and offers expert solutions. The *NTCA Reference Manual* is a comprehensive culmination of knowledge, research, and development that addresses common installation obstacles and issues in the tile and stone industry.

The *NTCA Reference Manual* is released annually and a **printed copy is mailed to all active members**. PDF and print are available by visiting the [NTCA Online Store](#).


ORDER NOW



2025/2026
National Tile Contractors Association



**REFERENCE
MANUAL**



PROBLEM CHARACTERISTICS
CAUSE • CURE • PREVENTION

ALASKAN TILE CONTRACTOR THRIVES ON

trust, excellence, and AMPLIFYING WOMEN in the industry



By Lesley Goddin, Editorial Director and Senior Writer

R&R Tile and Renovations, LLC Owner Rachel Overby, with a mitered-edge project. Find out more about R&R Tile and Renovations @r.n.tile on Instagram.

Rachel Overby, owner of R&R Tile and Renovations in Anchorage, Alaska, has been in the industry since 2015, when she was hired by a Denver-based construction company called Sister Fix It. She brought a background in carpentry to the company.

When it came to tile, she “learned the trade from an amazing woman named Karen Rush,” Overby said. “Karen had been setting tiles for nearly 40 years. She is a total badass—a tiny woman who is tough as nails. She taught me with a level of patience I’m grateful for every day. Because of her, I learned everything from traditional substrates to modern systems like Schluter.” Overby learned “the ‘old school’ foundations and an intro to the innovative products flooding the market today,” she said. “Our trade is always evolving, and Karen taught me that you can’t stay rigid, you have to stay open-minded because there are a million ways to ‘skin a cat’ in this industry.”

Overby said the “trust factor” truly sets her company apart from the competition. “When clients hear there is a female-led tile company, there is an immediate sense of safety and comfort,” she said. “They trust us in their homes, and they trust our attention to detail.”

Part of that detail is tackling a lot of large-format tile installs—2’x4’s and 4’x8’s—and a growing number of referrals for those complex installs.



Paper-faced glass mosaic tiles, which Overby’s company set with epoxy grout.

A network diagram with various icons connected by lines, including a speech bubble, gears, a smartphone, a laptop, a '4' in a circle, a 'www' in a circle, and a '@' symbol. The diagram is set against a white background with a teal diagonal overlay.

SAVINGS4 MEMBERS™

Powered by People. Driven by Purpose.

**Everything your business
needs to succeed, with
exclusive member discounts**

Learn more about member benefits:
ntca.savings4members.com

INDUSTRY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



MAPEI's Mapeheat™

MAPEI's Mapeheat™ radiant floor-heating systems are, and have always been, UL-certified. This means that the warmth you enjoy also brings with it peace of mind. Since MAPEI's entry into floor-heating in 2019, Mapeheat products have met UL's rigorous safety and sustainability standards. That trusted, third-party assurance is also backed by the Mapeheat system lifetime warranty, which includes the Mapeheat Cable, a component that not all suppliers' lifetime warranties cover.

The Mapeheat family of products includes Mapeheat Mat (pre-wired), Mapeheat Membrane (customizable), Mapeheat Cable, and programmable Mapeheat thermostats available in three formats — Mapeheat Thermo Basic, Mapeheat Thermo Touch and Mapeheat Thermo Connect (WiFi enabled to integrate with Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa and IFTTT).



Learning new skills—and testing them

Since it's rare to get hands-on training in Alaska, when manufacturers or suppliers travel to Alaska to offer courses, Overby jumps on the opportunity. The internet has also become an invaluable resource of videos and forums. It takes a little sifting through the "noise and the 'ego dinosaurs' of the industry, yet if you know what to look for, the information is there," she said. "I'm always pursuing ways to sharpen my skills."

Overby put her skills to the test in March 2025 with the All-Women CTI Test, offered on International Women's Day. "The CTI test was incredibly grueling, but it is essential if you want to be taken seriously as a professional tile setter," she said. "Being in Alaska, we are geographically removed from most testing and certification sites. Most people here didn't even know a certification existed until I mentioned I'm one of only four CTIs in the entire state of Alaska."

The test was life-changing for Overby. "It solidified my commitment to the trade I've been in for a decade," she said. "Beyond the technical standards, it connected me with a beautiful support group of women. In a male-dominated field, there is often a feeling that you can't just be the 'muscle'—you have to be the brains, the precision, and the execution. There is no room for error because, unfortunately, some expect you to fail. Meeting other women who ran their own businesses and were extremely talented was inspiring. There was no air of competition, only support, which made a stressful test much more comfortable."



24"x48" 1/2"-thick Mosa tiles were installed in this project.

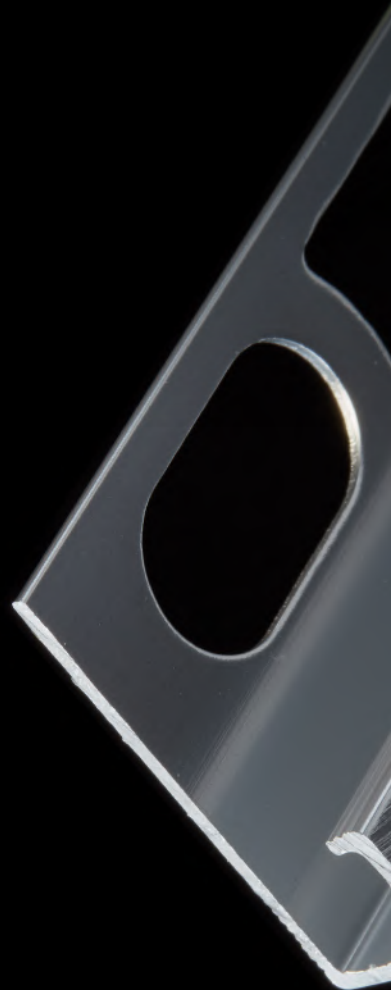


R&R Tile and Renovations installed this large-format 2'x4' wood-look tile with a basketweave mosaic and hidden tileable drain.



This project included an infinity niche, tiled corner footrest, and tileable shower drain.

High. Profile.



The industry's best profiles and trims

Learn More



Expect more. For the most complete line of high-quality, durable, color-complementary profiles and trims – with more than 4,500 pieces to match your creative design – [visit **www.mapei.us**](http://www.mapei.us)

Lighting the way for women in the industry

Overby never misses an opportunity to advocate for what NTCA's Women in Tile group does for women in the trades. "It is so important to show that there are organizations out there that have our backs and support our growth," she said. "Women make up only about 4% of the trades workforce, which feels staggeringly low. I want to help highlight moments where women can get involved, especially in areas of the industry where they might otherwise be overlooked or excluded."

"I meet women all the time who are interested in tile but feel like starting a business in a male-dominated field feels inaccessible unless you have years and years of training," she added. "Joining a crew where you are the only woman can also be intimidating. I believe visibility is the key to breaking that stigma."

As a business owner, Overby makes it a point to hire women first when she needs a helper. "It's been incredibly rewarding to train other women in the ins and outs of the craft," she said. "I encourage everyone to hire interested women. Our trade requires intense attention to detail and thoroughness, and those are traits I see women excel at constantly."

Overby joined the NTCA immediately after receiving her CTI certification in March 2025. "It has been an incredible resource for connecting with other members and accessing technical product information," she said. "The vouchers alone have been a great benefit—they've encouraged us to branch out and try different high-quality products we might not have otherwise sought out, and with that we've discovered some new favorites."

Tackling "big art projects"

The tile industry was not immune from the tariffs that hit suddenly last year. "I recently had a project where the actual material costs ended up being double my initial estimate. Both the homeowner and I were shocked by the jump," Overby said. "Since then, I've had to completely readjust my bidding process. I now include a much larger buffer for material costs and try to stay in communication with my suppliers to ensure my quotes reflect the most current pricing. It's about being transparent with the client while protecting the business from market volatility."

For Overby, the joys of the trade include "the freedom, the creativity, and the fact that I'm always learning. Whether I'm working alone or with a partner, I view every project as a 'big art project.' You start with the mess of demolition and then rebuild that space into something beautiful."



Overby nourishes herself right before the CTI All-Women's test last year. "Don't forget to eat while you're taking it!" she advised.

"The greatest joy is the moment the finishing touches are done, and you see the vision come to fruition. It's not just construction, it's a puzzle and a craft," she concluded. **TL**

WHAT THEY SAY...



I realize that other NTCA members probably feel the same love for the industry and artistry in tile - and we all share that feeling - NTCA is a home for that family. People communicate, help each other, support each other, and celebrate each other's accomplishments.

*Alex Tsituk, Owner, Trimworks, Inc.,
Shrewsbury, MA*

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN!

- Stay competitive with the latest industry training, webinars, and educational resources.
- Connect with industry leaders, peers, and potential clients.
- Benefit from business advice, and discounts on essential products and services.
- Get support on complex projects and industry best practices.



JOIN NTCA
and take your
tile business to the
to the **NEXT LEVEL!**



JOIN NOW

ONE *to* ONE



HILARY FRANK

**VICE PRESIDENT
OF COMMERCIAL
SALES AND
BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT
FOR DAL-TILE**

discusses
market strategy,
women in
leadership,
and the
future of tile



In the One-to-One column, NTCA Executive Director Bart Bettiga interviews industry leaders about pertinent topics.



Dal-Tile donated the tile and stone materials for the Artisans Revolution in Tile (A.R.T.) training last fall. Hilary Frank is shown here with the 107-piece koi mosaics that were made from these materials, beside NTCA's Bart Bettiga.

When Hilary Frank stepped into her new office on the third floor of Dal-Tile's corporate headquarters in Dallas, she was returning home—not geographically, but professionally. After nearly two decades with the company, her recent promotion to Vice President of Commercial Sales and Business Development represents a full-circle moment in a career that began in a design studio in Chicago. "I started in commercial, so now it's like coming home," Frank reflected during our conversation.

A career built on connection

Frank's path into the tile industry wasn't predetermined. Her mother is a florist with an eye for color and design; her father was a slab fabricator in Grand Rapids, Mich. When her family relocated to Chicago, her mother-in-law—who worked for a major builder standardized on DalTile—suggested she apply for a design consultant position. Her sister-in-law, already working for DalTile, encouraged her to take the leap.


That decision, made nearly 19 years ago, launched a career that would eventually span from the showroom floor to the executive suite.



The **Largest** Selection. The **Highest** Standards.

Innovation starts here. New Panoramic Porcelain Surfaces™ formats for shower walls and tub surrounds, available in 32×72, 32×90, and 36×90, paired with StepWise™ floors for superior slip resistance and lasting performance.

Photo features Haddonstone™ and Panoramic Porcelain Surfaces™.

 A DIVISION OF MOHAWK INDUSTRIES

 daltile®

©2026 Daltile

Commercial trends on the horizon

From Hilary Frank's vantage point overseeing product strategy, she cites several key trends shaping the commercial market:



Super-large format panels like Daltile's Panoramic Porcelain Statuario panels, shown here, are an up-and-coming trend.

- **Large-format tiles:** The shift toward oversized products is significant. "We're getting asked more and more for 36"x36", 48"x48", really large-format products, which makes training all the more important because you've got to get those installed correctly," Frank noted.



Daltile's Artefino Jewel pyramid hexagon mosaic is an example of an artisanal look, one of the key commercial trends for 2026.

- **Artisanal and statement pieces:** Designers are increasingly seeking unique, handmade characteristics. "We're seeing a lot of artisanal looks: things that have a handmade or a unique characteristic to them, statement type of pieces," Frank said.



Artsy, a 24"x24" porcelain from Daltile, is a hyper-realistic stone look suited for exterior use.

- **Hyper-realistic stone looks:** Porcelain tiles that mimic natural stone continue to gain traction, particularly for exterior applications. "We're seeing a big shift to adding porcelain into exterior environments," she said. "It gives you that natural stone look, for example, without some of the pitfalls you might find with actual natural stone in the exterior environment."



The Dal-Tile team at the Flooring Sustainability Summit in Washington, D.C., July 2025.

The scope of responsibility

Today, Frank's role encompasses three major areas. She leads commercial sales strategy across the Daltile, American Olean, and Marazzi brands, overseeing roughly 150 specification representatives nationwide who work with architects and designers. She manages the national-accounts segment, securing specifications for chain restaurants and retail locations. And she oversees the installation products business, managing vendor partnerships, assortment, pricing, and contracts.

Frank acknowledged that it's a lot on her plate. "But it works because of how we go to market," she explained. "My specification reps focus on the design phase—architects, designers, ownership developers. Meanwhile, our sales counterparts are the main point of contact for contractor partners. We work as a team in tandem, so we don't have to shift focus, because we already have somebody focused on both sides of the equation."

2025 performance and 2026 outlook

Despite economic headwinds, Daltile's commercial division performed well in 2025.

"We did very well in commercial for 2025," Frank said. "We saw a lot of projects come to fruition that had kind of been on hold or had a very expanded timeline from first projection."

Build your skilled tile team from the ground up!

The NTCA's Apprenticeship Guidelines, registered with the U.S. Department of Labor, give you the blueprint to create your own "learn-while-you-earn" programs for tile finishers and setters. Combine hands-on training with NTCA University online learning, develop clear career paths, and boost your recruitment. NTCA provides the guidelines, resources, and even recruitment materials to get you started. Ready to invest in your future?

Visit www.tile-assn.com/page/NTCA_apprenticeship_guidelines for more info.



■ ONE-TO-ONE

Looking ahead to 2026, Frank expressed cautious optimism. “We’re looking at 2026 with a lot of optimism. We still have a good pipeline, and I think we’ve done a nice job taking some marketshare within the segment.”

Market position and strategy

Dal-Tile’s strength lies in its position as the largest U.S. manufacturer—a message that resonates throughout the sales process.

“We’ve been able to tell that story through all different phases of the project,” Frank explained. “It’s been a successful talking point as we specified. But then even as projects have progressed, if there are changes or delays or problems with products that had been specified that weren’t our product, we’ve been able to help partners navigate to keep their projects on time and on budget.”

The company hasn’t shifted its strategy despite tariff pressures and market fragmentation. The two-pronged approach—specification reps working with designers and sales reps working with contractors—remains effective because it addresses both sides of the commercial equation.

National accounts: a team effort

When asked about national-account development, Frank emphasized that there’s no single starting point.

“Sometimes we work through a contractor, sometimes it’s with the national account directly, and sometimes it’s with an architectural firm,” she said. “It’s really because we have that broad national team that we’re able to touch all those touchpoints as needed to help secure the specification.”

The installation products connection

The addition of installation products management to Frank’s portfolio initially seemed disconnected from commercial sales. But Frank discovered unexpected synergies.

“When I first considered the role, this didn’t seem connected,” Frank admitted. “As I’ve done the role more, there’s such an importance of specifying the products on a commercial project. I’ve been able to make connections—because of wearing both hats—that we weren’t leveraging completely before.”

NTCA board service

Frank’s involvement with the National Tile Contractors Association extends beyond her corporate responsibilities. She serves on the NTCA board, a role she values for keeping her customer-centric.

“NTCA gives me the ability to connect with customers,



Frank is a strong proponent of training and product knowledge programs for successful installation of new large-format tiles, panels and slabs, and to grow the pool of qualified installers for the industry in general.

hear them, and keep a more customer-centric approach to strategy,” Frank said. “I get to hear what a contractor’s thinking about a national account or what they feel like we should really be carrying in the stores, and feed that into how we move forward to make the best experience for our customers.”

The board position also strengthens relationships between DalTile and contractors nationwide. “I definitely have had several [contractors] that said, ‘Hey, I really need help with this,’ and I’ve been able to connect somebody with the right person,” Frank noted. “Person-to-person contact is so important. We do such better business that way.”

The corporate transition

Moving from Regional Vice President of Sales for the Midwest to a corporate role in Dallas has brought both challenges and rewards. The most difficult adjustment involved navigating corporate systems and processes—a learning curve Frank has since overcome.

“I’ve been with the company a long time, but never had a corporate position, so just learning how to navigate getting things done was an initial hiccup along the way,” Frank said. “But now I’m in a good groove.”

The move also meant relocating her family 900 miles and adjusting five children—including two sets of twins—to new schools. Yet the transition has been eased by Dal-Tile’s welcoming culture.

Ceramic Tile Hygiene Facts

Ceramic tile is one of the healthiest flooring choices available, all without compromising on artistic versatility.



HEALTHY HOME



ALLERGEN FREE

Ceramic's nonporous surface doesn't allow allergens in the environment such as dust, dirt, and pollen to penetrate.



NO PVC

Polyvinyl chloride is a resin found in some vinyl flooring that contains phthalates and organotins, both a concern among health experts.



NO FORMALDEHYDE Certain levels of formaldehyde can irritate asthma and other respiratory disorders. Ceramic tile does not contain formaldehyde.



BACTERIA-RESISTANT

Ceramic tile is inhospitable to the growth of bacteria.



NONTOXIC

Ceramic tile doesn't emit any toxic fumes when exposed to heat or fire.



NO VOCs

Volatile organic compounds are harmful gases that may cause various health concerns and are emitted by many non-ceramic flooring types.

HEALTHY CLEANING



EASY TO CLEAN

Wiping with some soap and water is all that's needed to clean up most messes — no harsh chemicals are necessary.



ANTIMICROBIAL

Options can suppress and even destroy harmful microorganisms, such as mold, fungi, bacteria, and viruses.



SCRATCH-RESISTANT

Dents, scrapes, and cuts often seen in other materials aren't the same danger for ceramic tile.



STAIN-RESISTANT

Your life is bound to see many messes—ceramic tile doesn't stain easily!



LOWEST CARBON FOOTPRINT

Lowest global warming potential and lowest fossil fuel resource depletion in North America.



LOWEST LIFE CYCLE COST

Less replacement costs compared to other flooring materials.



RECYCLING

Pre- and post-consumer recycled options are available.

HEALTHY PLANET



Healthy for your Family. Healthy for the Environment.

Download this free showroom poster of ceramic tile hygiene benefits ► at <https://whytile.com/library/health-hygiene-and-cleanliness-benefits-poster/>



■ ONE-TO-ONE

“It was like coming home,” Frank said. “A lot of things I used to do or think about are just right back, top of mind. We moved 900 miles with a family of seven, but people have been very welcoming and we have a great company culture.”

Leading women in tile

With the tile industry often perceived as male-dominated, Frank has taken a proactive approach to supporting women in her organization. A few years ago, she worked with Dal-Tile leadership to launch LEADher, an internal women’s networking and leadership community.

“LEADher is to help women within our organization learn different parts of the business, learn from each other, connect, network, and hopefully excel in their current roles,” Frank explained. “If they want to move into leadership, we find ways and paths to do that.”

The initiative is entering its fifth year in March, coinciding with International Women’s Day. Frank credits her own success to managers who championed her potential and her willingness to ask questions.



When working with national accounts, like Dunkin Donuts, a broad national team is able to connect all the dots for the project specifications, whether the principal is a contractor, the national account directly, or an architectural firm.



A few years ago, Hilary Frank worked with Dal-Tile leadership to launch LEADher, an internal women’s networking and leadership community.



WONDER
PORCELAIN™
Coverings 2026
Booth 4439

Wall: Vayron
Floor: Silvanus

■ ONE-TO-ONE

“One of the things that helped me is I really always had managers who were real champions and saw that I had some potential. I was willing to raise my hand and ask to learn and do different things,” Frank reflected. “I wasn’t afraid to say, ‘Hey, I don’t really understand this. Can you explain it? Because I’m interested and here’s why.’”

Frank advises women entering the industry to have “the confidence to say, ‘I’m not sure, but I want to learn.’ Showing that curiosity can help you grow a lot as a person, both personally and professionally.”

Balancing family and leadership

Managing a demanding corporate role while raising five children requires significant support and strategic planning. Frank emphasizes that asking for help isn’t a weakness; it’s a necessity.

“It’s having a supportive network or partnership or whatever that looks like for you,” Frank said. “It’s also being able to say, ‘I can’t do this myself.’ And that’s really hard for me. I like to think I’m a jack of all trades; I can get anything done I put my mind to. I have to remind myself to delegate. But I do feel like I have to accept that I can’t do everything. And so I have to have help.”

Her practical advice: “A really good calendaring system and a willingness to delegate are essential.”

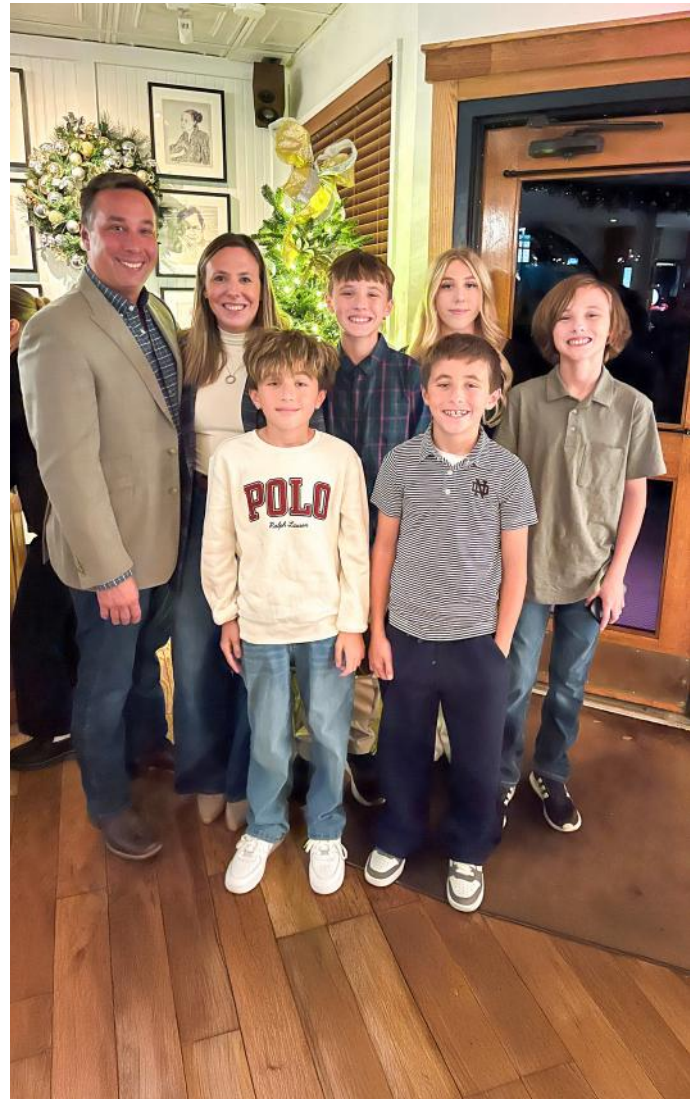
The critical role of training

As products become more complex and formats grow larger, training has become essential to addressing labor shortages and ensuring quality installation.

“If you listen to any kind of industry forum, we talk a lot about labor shortage,” Frank said. “The only way to end a labor shortage is to get more people trained to do the work. And so the only way to do that is to offer training.”

The challenge is significant. “When I started with Daltile, 12”x12” was the norm. And now we’re talking 48”x48”. Installing that large size is a pretty big difference. So we want to collaborate with partners and installers so [the tile] goes in and looks just as good on the finished floor as it does in the sample.”

Daltile supports training through its own programs, partnerships with NTCA, and collaboration with installation product vendors. “We’re working with our vendor partners to offer those types of training and product knowledge programs, both for our store associates and the customers who go to our stores.”



Frank’s new position meant relocating her family 900 miles away and adjusting five children—including two sets of twins—to new schools.

Looking forward

As Frank settles into her corporate role, her focus remains on what has driven her throughout her 19-year tenure at Dal-Tile: understanding customer needs, building relationships, and positioning the company for success in an evolving market.

Her journey from design consultant to regional vice president to corporate leader reflects both personal determination and the opportunities available to those willing to ask questions, embrace change, and support others along the way.

“I love helping other people be successful,” Frank said, “and I feel like it’s helped a lot of people find ways to grow in their own careers.” **TL**



cool tools

Chris Resti, Crest Tile and Mosaic, Hilton, N.Y.



“Although I don’t typically choose favorites, I love my denture brush for cleaning out grout joints. While most people use a toothbrush, the denture brush has two sides—one of them is angled and gets into joints very well. It also lasts considerably longer than a toothbrush. ”

Contractors and tile setters share their favorite tools and equipment. Share yours at lesley@tile-assn.com.



Find us on Facebook



NTCA TRAINING WORKSHOPS



[CLICK HERE](#)

NTCATRAINING.COM



Innovations in tile installation in 2026



AI is here to assist the tile industry with new and faster methods. (Courtesy of Gerd Altman, Pixabay)

By Scott Carothers, Academic Director, CTEF

On tile projects, whether large or small, residential or commercial, the tile industry has always been pushed to complete a project faster, better, and less expensively. However, the statement “haste makes waste” is lurking in the background ready to wreak havoc on the finished product. This is due to some time-saving economies that cut corners. We all know that this is a recipe for failure, but there are recently developed products and practices that can provide shorter schedules without sacrificing quality.

Artificial intelligence

AI is a buzz word to those involved with this new tool—and a fear factor to those who are not. It calls to mind Franklin D. Roosevelt’s famous quote from his 1933 first inaugural address: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” He was urging people to move from the paralysis that gripped the United States during the Great Depression to overcome their fears and do something, get involved. The same is true with artificial intelligence (AI). The public can sit back and say, “This is scary,” or jump into it and find out what it is and how it could assist in daily activities.

There are software packages available that can manage the daily tasks of creating shop drawings, creating and sending RFIs (requests for information), installation layout and tile cutting schedules, waste reduction, and improved work efficiency. The real beauty of these systems is that the information is filed efficiently and stored in the cloud for easy access by all who are a part of the project.

For instance, when looking at a tile installation, once the measurements are determined, the data is loaded into the AI software, which yields an incredibly detailed plan for the cuts around the perimeter of the room, as well as the cuts around offsets and angles.



Installing GPTP on a commercial wall using a suction cup rack makes the job easier and safer. (Courtesy of Artcraft Granite, Marble, and Tile)

Become a Why Tile Partner

The **free** Why Tile Partner Portal is a user-friendly resource to assist you in sharing the advantages of ceramic tile.

- access a library of free tools and support distributed via the Why Tile Partner website partners.WhyTile.com
- keep current on ceramic tile industry news
- share the benefits of using ceramic tile with customers and potential customers
- build enthusiasm for choosing ceramic tile
- inspire creativity in the use of ceramic tile

Simple registration

1. Go to partners.WhyTile.com
2. Register name and email
3. All set!

You will receive a monthly email with prepared Why Tile partner social media posts plus the latest industry news and marketing tools.



Exclusive Resources for Why Tile Partners:

- Why Tile Partner guides with tips on taking full advantage of partner benefits and how to best utilize all of Why Tile's marketing resources
- Why Tile partner branding to identify your support of the industry
- Publications, posters, and prepared monthly social media posts to use in your own campaigns and communications
- Presentations for your use that convey the benefits of ceramic tile over other surface materials and explain industry issues and advancements



**SMART.
BEAUTIFUL.**



an ever-growing bank of content and research

■ TECHNICAL

One may think that the software will take more time, but actually, it does not. Once measurements for the job are obtained, an installer using the pencil-and-paper method must determine the amount of tile needed, add a waste factor, and figure out the layout with balanced cuts on each side of the room.

Using the software method, the entered data along with the project details provides a comprehensive list including the amount of tile required, the waste factor, the cut sizes as well as possibilities to reduce waste by using the leftover tile for smaller cuts.

Handling and cutting tools

When gauged porcelain tile panels (GPTP) were introduced

in the United States, there were extremely limited installation methods or tools available. Through the efforts of a small group of tile industry companies, installation methods were developed and evaluated. Over the period of about two years, the American National Standard Institute (ANSI) standard A137.3 for Gauged Porcelain Tile Panels/Slabs (the product) and the interior installation standards ANSI A108.19 were established. Shortly afterward, the exterior installation standard, A108.20, was approved.

Without tools and procedures, the challenging work of innovation began. Aesop's proverb, "Necessity is the mother of invention," went into action by providing a whole new category of tools. Suction cup frames—also referred to as racks—of various configurations allow



Cutting GPTP using a small angle grinder and a small-diameter cutting wheel with a water source eliminates dust. (Courtesy of Pasha Starykov, Star Tile & Stone, LLC)



Top Brands at Coverings®

THE GLOBAL TILE & STONE EXPERIENCE

Check out the Industry's Leading Brands at our Booth #4058

March 30 - April 2, 2026 • Las Vegas, Nevada



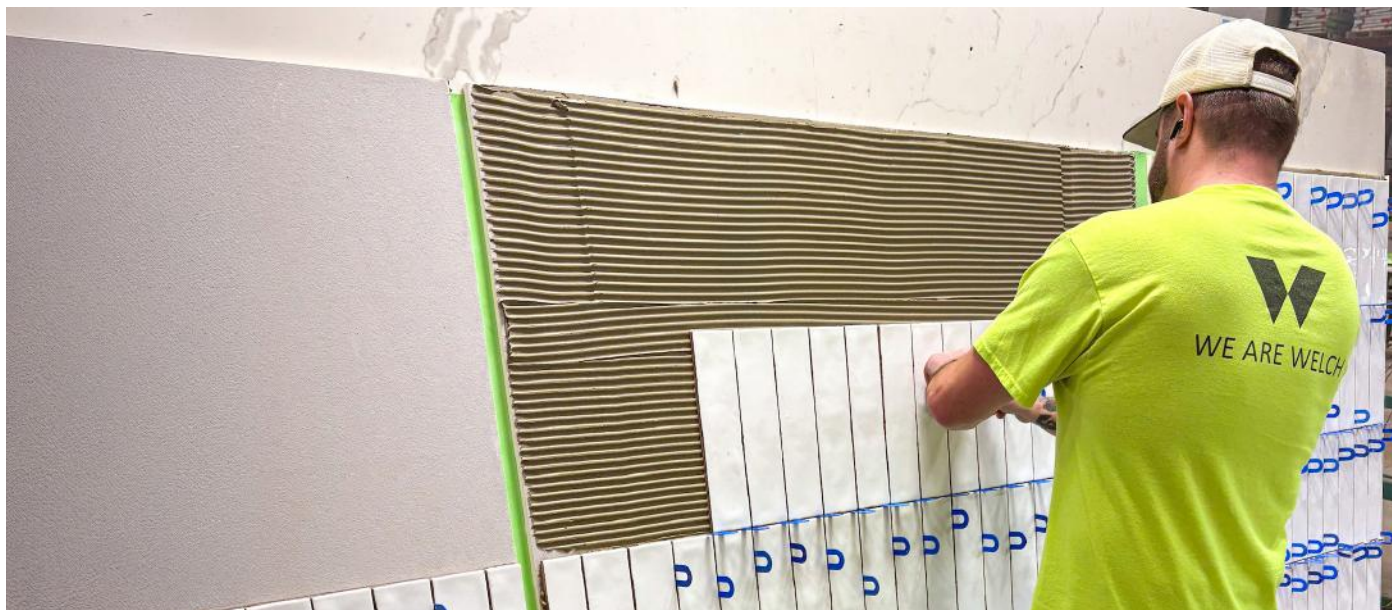
Celebrating Over 25 Years of Innovative Products & Service!



Dealer Inquiries Welcome!
Call Today (262) 432-0877



WWW.RTCPRODUCTS.COM
SALES@RTCPRODUCTS.COM



Prefabricated tile panels being set in the shop rather than on the jobsite minimizes installer fatigue and provides faster installations. (Courtesy of Welch Tile Solutions)

the installer to safely unload the product from the crate or A-frame, move it to the fabrication table, and to the permanent location. These racks also stabilize the panels, which include 90-degree cut corners that can weaken the panel, making it susceptible to cracking if not transported in a flat plane. Another great tool that assists in moving the panel to its location and manipulating the panel into position is the manual pump-up or electric suction cup.

Angle grinders have been a part of the fabrication business for years, but given the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations, airborne dust must be controlled. Adding measured amounts of water to the cutting tool has resolved that issue. Through this evolution, the much lighter and smaller long-neck angle milling and drilling tool was developed. Accordingly, the diamond cutting wheels also got smaller (1 1/2" to 2") allowing for cutting tight radiuses and more intricate detail work.

Diamond sanding pads have been a part of the natural stone industry for

years and were adapted for use on GTP for hand sanding and polishing using grits from 50 to 3000. Likewise, diamond polishing pads for angle grinders provide a finished product in less time.

Sizing, cutting offsite, and prefabricated panels

Tight delivery schedules have also required changes in the fabrication process. Many contractors are operating more effectively by getting detailed jobsite measurement and cutting the tile or fabricating panels in their shop as opposed to on the job. On wall installations, this is especially helpful since the installers can complete the fabrication process on a worktable rather than wherever space allows at the jobsite. This reduces back strain, knee issues, and fatigue while increasing productivity. As an example, Dan Welch, CTI #1 and NTCA Five-Star Accredited Contractor, created Welch Tile Solutions (WTS), which manufactures prefabricated shower pans and wall panel systems. For more information, see the full article starting on page 60 in the December 2025 *TileLetter*.



This small, long-neck grinder, using a 45 mm (1-25/32") thin rim cutting wheel with a water supply, facilitates cutting tight radiuses and chip-free cuts. (Courtesy of Tile ProSource)



In this new year, be open to trying new products and systems that can save time, produce high-quality work, and put more money in your pocket. The old adage "work smarter not harder" says it all. **TL**



[&]



PREFERRED PARTNER
Get More for Your Business
The Only HCM Solution You'll Ever Need

Simply Powerful

Founded in 2003, Netchex has become one of the industry's fastest growing HCM providers, servicing clients in all 50 states. Netchex's single-source solution is a cloud-based, end-to-end platform for managing the entire employee process from hire to retire, with award winning customer service.

Simply Better



Netchex delivers 360 integration capabilities on your NTCA 401(k) plan, which allows members to lower their administrative burdens and remove timely and accurate deposit submission liability with just one click. Submit payroll and you are done.

INTUITIVE



Our applicant tracking system with built-in intelligence. Combine it with our innovative onboarding platform and simplify your entire hiring process.

PRECISE



Get employees paid faster. Get taxes filed automatically. Get everyone onboard smiling. Get Netchex and get to love your payroll system.

INNOVATIVE



Critical data at a moment's notice. Analytics on demand. Support teams at the ready. Powerful interface meets welcoming interface with Netchex HR.

DYNAMIC



Comprehensive doesn't have to mean complex. Benefits solutions that are straightforward, and worry-free.

To learn more, visit <http://info.netchexonline.com/ntca>

ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask the Experts Q&As are culled from member inquiries to NTCA's Technical Team. To become a member and make use of personal, targeted answers from NTCA's Technical Team to your installation questions, contact Jim Olson at jim@tile-assn.com.



QUESTION

I am a tile contractor in Georgia with four employees. I need to drill a hole in a 3"x9" frosted glass with backing. The glass is cracking well after I have drilled the hole. The very experienced glass guy said he will not install his glass over glass tile because it cracks. He said he's done experiments where he has drilled holes, left the tile overnight, and come back to a cracked tile. If I succeed in drilling a hole without cracking, am I setting the homeowner up for a crack later? Would you advise bisecting the tile and carving out the hole to release that tension? What's the best play here?

ANSWER

Thank you for reaching out with this question. It's a good one, and a fairly common concern when working with glass tile.

What you're describing is consistent with what many installers and glass fabricators have experienced. Glass is inherently brittle and sensitive to stress, heat, and vibration. When a hole is drilled, even if it looks successful initially, internal stresses within the tile can cause delayed cracking hours or even days later. Factors such as tile composition, backing type, edge contact, and the thermal expansion characteristics of the substrate and setting material can all contribute to this delayed failure.

A key thing to understand is that glass is a poor conductor of heat. As you're drilling, the area under the bit heats up while the surrounding glass stays cool, which creates thermal stress that can lead to cracking. To help manage this, use plenty of water to keep the drill area cool throughout the process.

When drilling glass, technique and tooling both matter:

- Avoid "rocking" the drill in a circular motion as is sometimes done with ceramic or porcelain—this can cause microchips around the edges of the hole.



If at all possible, holes for hardware or penetrations should be pre-drilled before installation by the tile or glass fabricator.



ONLINE LEARNING

NTCA University is a comprehensive online platform offering tile installation courses designed for individuals new to the industry or those seeking to refresh their skills. These courses are an excellent resource for training or apprenticeship programs, ensuring that learners are equipped with industry-standard methods and practices before applying their knowledge through hands-on or on-the-job learning. Additionally, these courses are beneficial for sales associates and professionals in other roles within the tile industry, providing valuable insights into the principles and processes of tile installation. NTCA University also features business courses tailored to small business owners. Accessible 24/7 via computer, tablet, or smartphone, NTCA University allows learners the flexibility to study at their convenience.

[**LEARN MORE**](#)

Level up your tile game

Download on the **App Store**

GET IT ON **Google Play**

We're excited to announce the launch of our new mobile app! Share tips, ask questions, swap stories, and get advice from experts and colleagues that are just as passionate about tile as you! Join the conversation today!



There are no special "garage-only" tile methods; however, garages are considered high-stress environments, so strict adherence to substrate preparation, material selection, coverage requirements, and movement joints is essential for long-term performance.

- Start the hole by holding the drill at a slight angle, then slowly bring it up to 90° once the bit has a grip. Keep a steady, consistent speed and pressure.
- Not all diamond hole saws are created equal. A less-aggressive diamond pattern will help you drill more smoothly and reduce chipping.
- Once the hole is complete, polish the edges on both sides of the glass. Drilling or cutting glass leaves behind microchips—tiny fractures at the edge that can spread over time. Think of a small rock chip in a windshield: it may stay stable for months, then suddenly turn into a large crack with vibration or temperature change. Polishing removes these microchips and significantly lowers the chance of delayed cracking.

Even with careful technique, drilling through installed glass tile eliminates the possibility of polishing the edges. If at all possible, holes for hardware or penetrations should be pre-drilled before installation by the tile or glass fabricator. If modification is unavoidable, your idea of bisecting the tile and carving around the penetration to relieve tension is a smart approach—but may not be acceptable to the homeowner.

It's also worth noting that even with every precaution, glass under stress from hardware such as shower door hinges can still fail. I've personally followed every step listed here and still had to replace cracked tiles under hinge points. For that reason, I would encourage pre-drilling and

planning hole locations during the installation process whenever possible.

QUESTION

I have a customer who wants their concrete garage floor tiled. Aside from standard prep (grind/clean concrete, ensure flatness) and proper setting techniques (correct thinset, coverage, expansion, etc.), is there anything exclusive to installing tile in areas subject to vehicle load? Any particular recommendations on products (I would assume porcelain, freeze/thaw-stable) or underlayments (I usually use DITRA) to consider?

ANSWER

All of your assumptions are 100% accurate, and you are clearly on the right track.

A successful garage tile installation starts not only with a clean concrete slab, but also a flat concrete substrate that meets ANSI A108 flatness requirements for the selected tile size. Grinding, cleaning, and verifying flatness are critical first steps.

Both Schluter-DITRA and Schluter ALL-SET are rated for this type of installation when installed strictly per the manufacturer's instructions, including substrate preparation,

trowel selection, coverage, and curing requirements.

From a tile standpoint, it is important to verify the intended use with the tile manufacturer, specifically confirming suitability for vehicular traffic. That said, your inclination toward a porcelain tile that is freeze/thaw-stable is appropriate. The installation should achieve 95%–100% mortar coverage, particularly given the point loads and rolling loads associated with vehicles.

In addition, movement accommodation is critical. Follow TCNA EJ171, which requires:

- A sealant joint around the entire perimeter
- Movement joints in the field every 12' in each direction for exterior or garage-type conditions, and more frequently if exposed to temperature swings or sunlight

There are no special "garage-only" tile methods beyond what you've already outlined; however, garages are considered high-stress environments, so strict adherence to substrate preparation, material selection, coverage requirements, and movement joints is essential for long-term performance.

Overall, your approach—proper concrete prep, appropriate uncoupling, verified porcelain tile selection, full coverage, and correct expansion detailing—is exactly what the industry standards and manufacturers support. **TL**



Your Source for Tile Education & Certified Tile Installation Professionals

CTEF provides a valuable service to the tile industry through local, regional and national training programs as well as through the Certified Tile Installer program. The CTEF has numerous educational and training courses available covering all facets of tile and the installation process. Classes and certifications are conducted on a year-round basis at the CTEF facility in Nashville, TN and Egg Harbor Township, NJ, in addition to numerous satellite programs elsewhere in the United States.



www.tilecareer.com



NTCA WEBINARS

NTCA Webinars are free, are offered bi-monthly, and cover topics such as tile installation solutions, installation products, and tile trends.

Visit tile-assn.com/page/ntca-webinars





Technology: New tools to enhance the tile artisan's craft

By Lesley Goddin, Editorial Director and Senior Writer



From drawing to template to intricate cut pieces, Lucas Hendrickson designed this ambitious mosaic for Bite Society at Pike Place Market in Seattle.

Artisan tilesetting encompasses a range of technologies, from the basic pencil-and-paper sketch to software and devices that accelerate and facilitate the process. In this story, several artisan tilesetters share their workflow, and how high- and low-tech processes support their goals.

Bridging the gap between digital perfection and real-world craftsmanship

Lucas Hendrickson of Northwest Artisan Tile Company in Auburn, Wash., relies on technology, especially in the early stages of creating mosaics, logos, and custom pieces. He partners with collaborators who are experienced in creating templates using Adobe Illustrator or Procreate (iPad) software. Chris Resti, owner of Crest Tile and Mosaics in Hilton, N.Y., and a fellow Artisans Revolution in Tile (A.R.T.) mosaic program alumnus, is one of his best partners.

Hendrickson said, “Most logos and illustrations aren’t designed with mosaic-cutting in mind. They often need to be subtly rethought so they translate into physical material—accounting for tile size, blade radius, curve limitations, and sometimes adding relief or cut lines that wouldn’t exist in the

original artwork, but are necessary to make pieces float and lock together properly. The technology helps bridge that gap between digital perfection and real-world craftsmanship.”

Hendrickson said that some of the best mosaics in the world are created using just a projector to sketch and size the design. But he prefers the vinyl templating method that he learned about at A.R.T. Hendrickson uses a large-format USCutter vinyl plotter due to its flexibility with larger widths. “These machines are commonly used for sign-making, stickers, or apparel graphics, but they translate really well into mosaic templating,” he said. User-friendly Sure Cuts A Lot Pro software allows him to drag in the file, trace it, size it, and send it to the plotter.

“Before cutting, I often swap the blade for a pen and do a dry run on the back of the vinyl to make



www.tcnatile.com

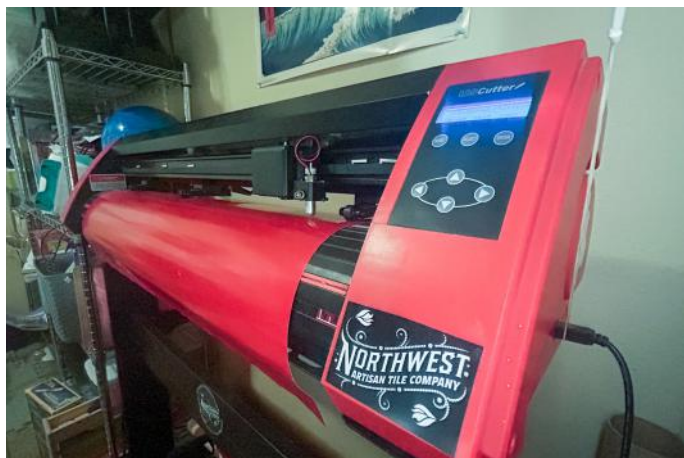
PREPARE FOR SUCCESS



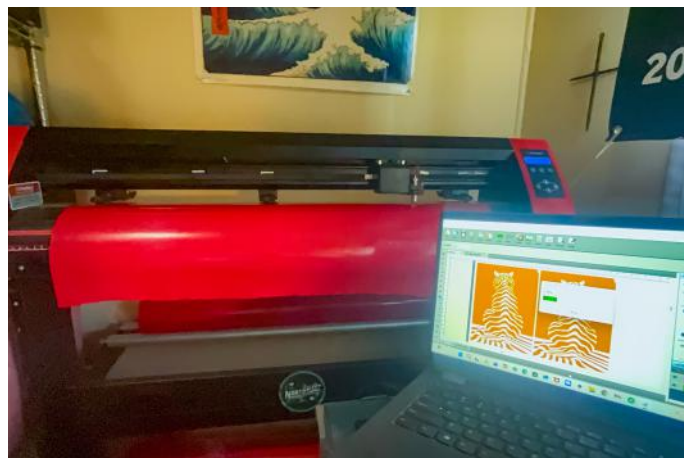
ANSI A108.19 and A137.3

In addition to having a unique product standard (A137.3), gauged porcelain tiles and gauged porcelain tile panels/slabs require unique installation procedures and workmanship standards (A108.19).

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY



Lucas Hendrickson's USCutter vinyl plotter and two templates in process.



sure everything tracks correctly and nothing runs off the edge," he said. "Once I'm happy, I cut the vinyl and make extras, which I keep in a manila envelope so replacement templates are always on hand during installation."

Hendrickson said he also uses AI to "work through ideas with clients or develop personal artwork when I'm trying to translate what's in my head into something visible. I'll often generate multiple versions, crop or edit them, combine elements using apps like Adobe Express or Creative Cloud, and sometimes even feed edited images back into AI to refine them further. It's especially helpful when I hit a wall or keep getting repetitive results. Sometimes AI even helps me refine the prompt itself."

For Hendrickson, technology supports the craft. "It allows more precision up front so that the hands-on work can stay intentional, efficient, and expressive once the cutting and setting begins."

Learning the tech tools

Sarah Thelen, owner of S. Thelen Construction, LLC, specializes in the artistic side of remodeling, including woodwork and kitchen, bath and tile work, in Omaha, Neb. An A.R.T. alumna, she recently created her first custom mosaic piece for Louisiana State University.

Admitting she is not tech-savvy and leaning heavily on her brother Rory's AV engineering expertise for technology questions, she used the paper-and-pencil method to develop mosaic designs initially. But Rory adapted her mom's Cricut machine to print her vinyl templates.

"It took about two hours for him to figure out; then he taught me in five

minutes!" she said. "We ended up taking a photo of each area of the drawn-up mosaic, uploading it to Cricut's program, and creating the lines/pieces. The Cricut vinyls work the best for sticking to the tiles. We tried to break the tiny details out by color so it didn't get so confusing. The tiger I am working on now took five different cut pages to get the pieces correct."

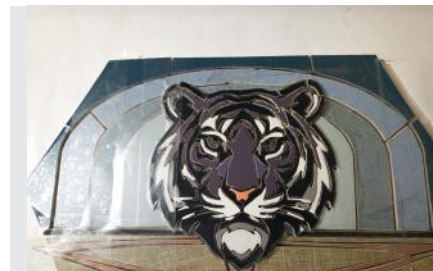
Thelen normally uses Autodesk AutoCAD for layout production and design and Bluebeam for blueprints. "I use maybe 10 percent of what [AutoCAD] can handle," she said. A friend mentioned to her that AutoCAD has a sketch feature, which Thelen explored for an hour.

Eureka! "I had the design program I was looking for all along," she exclaimed. "I laughed at my own ignorance with technology. It would have saved so much time!"

Now she just uploads the photos she wants as her design, sketches over them with the AutoCAD program, saves everything by section, and prints them off with the Cricut machine.

Procreate and Cricut speed the process

Another Cricut aficionado is Snowbee Custom Tile in Canton, Ohio. Co-owner Rochelle Snowberger said



Sarah Thelen's first mosaic. Here's the permanent Cricut template with Thelen's hand tools, which included a QEP honing tool and a Dremel. The shaped tiger mosaic is mounted with plastic tape on front, ready to be flipped and set.

#COVERINGS2026

A DAZZLING DISPLAY OF INNOVATION & INSPIRATION

Each year, Coverings draws and inspires thousands of industry professionals with nine miles of stunning tile and stone displays, along with countless opportunities to grow and connect.

In 2026, Coverings will showcase the enduring beauty, strength and versatility of ceramic tile and natural stone—materials that elevate the places where we live, work, and create lasting memories. A thousand immersive exhibits and a dynamic education program will bring ingenuity and artistry to life at this global event.

Join the conversation, spark collaboration, and explore tomorrow's trends and breakthroughs—defining the future of tile and stone.

Las Vegas, NV **March 30 – April 2, 2026**

REGISTER NOW AT **Coverings.com**

Coverings[®]
THE GLOBAL TILE & STONE EXPERIENCE



#COVERINGS2026



From original photo to templated piece to finished mosaic, the Snowbee Custom Tile team combined Procreate with Cricut templating to create this “The Man in the Arena” mosaic of LeBron James.

she and her husband Aryk use the iPad, Apple Pencil and Cricut to make the templates for their mosaics. Their favorite software is Procreate. “I have learned so much already, and I learn something new with each template we make!” she said.

Rochelle used Procreate and Apple Pencil to trace the outline of LeBron James in their latest mosaic, “The Man in the Arena.” They then added lines or joints to highlight wrinkles, shadows and other details. Once they were satisfied with the drawing, they uploaded it into the Cricut, adjusted the size, and made sure both the cuts and the piece sizes worked.

Once cut, the Snowbergers label the sticky vinyl pieces before placing them onto the tile. That gives them more time to “hand cut, shape and polish them into precisely the right shape,” she said.

Though the Snowbee team has created mosaics without it, the technology “speeds up the design process that most of us artists aren’t even able to charge for,” she explained. “Time is money!”

Another Procreate user is Angie Ré, owner of Unique Mosaics in South Salt Lake, Utah. “I like to use Procreate on my iPad to work up the idea for my clients, then I print out the drawing’s actual size and use it as a template for reference while I build the mosaic,” she said.

Summing up

“None of this technology really feels new at its core,” Hendrickson concluded. “Almost every process I use can be traced back to something very primitive—tracing, transferring, scaling, repeating, and planning before



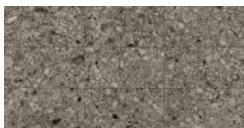
Angie Ré designs her murals in Procreate and then prints the drawing as a true-to-size size template for reference while building the mosaic.

cutting. Whether it was charcoal on stone, paper cartoons, pouncing, or full-scale floor drawings, artisans have always looked for ways to move an idea from the mind to the material accurately.

“The tools have evolved, but the intent hasn’t,” he added. “Software replaces paper, vinyl replaces dusted lines, and digital images replace sketches, yet the underlying logic remains the same. To me, modern technology isn’t a departure from traditional craft, it’s simply the latest refinement of the same problem-solving instincts artisans have relied on for centuries.” **TL**



Visit TileLetter.com for information on these products, and more.



Landmark Ceramics

The Mood collection emulates three kinds of natural stone in glazed porcelain tile. Mood Earth channels

the warm harmony of limestone; Mood Stone draws from the rigorous beauty of Ardenne stone; Mood Urban (shown) stages an expressive interpretation of ceppo di gré.



Merola Tile

Four new wall tile collections by Merola Tile capture the spirit of the American Southwest. Inspired by the desert energy of Scottsdale, Sedona, Tucson, and Phoenix, Ariz., these porcelain wall tile collections radiate warmth, texture, and style. Each collection comes in a versatile 17/8" x 17 3/4" format in a unique range of hues.



WOW Design

Inspired by the glassy wall tiles of '60s and '70s interiors, Micare reinterprets retro glazing, offering a contemporary ceramic language with depth and rhythm. The six ranges in the collection use a richly textured vitreous glaze that

incorporates mica. The palette for the small-format 5cm x 15cm (1.96" x 5.9") tiles spans earthy, warm, and rich tones, grouped into ranges that move from sandy neutrals to mineral greens and blues, with more spiced accents. The line offers two reliefs for textural appeal.



Decocer

The Abaco collection reinterprets the traditional 10cm x 10cm (4" x 4") format through a contemporary lens. As its name suggests, the collection draws inspiration from the order and harmony of this ancestral calculating tool, turning each piece into a module capable of generating infinite rhythms, patterns, and atmospheres. Crafted in matte porcelain stoneware, Abaco enables the creation of sober, tactile, and functional surfaces for both walls and floors, indoors or outdoors. Its soft and balanced palette—from whites, sands, and earthy tones to greys, greens, and blacks—allows for clean, timeless compositions with very clear graphic readability.



Daltile

The Remedy collection expands with the addition of four new colors. Tonic and Aura, two warm neutrals, evoke a grounding earthiness, and two cool tones, Vitality and Oasis, capture the

timelessness of ocean blues. This Made in the USA collection is an artisanal glazed porcelain wall tile available in smooth and fluted tile with a glossy finish, suitable for both indoor and outdoor use in freezing and non-freezing climates on walls, backsplashes, and pool linings.

NEWS TICKER

Visit [Tileletter.com](https://www.tileletter.com) for details on the following headlines, and more.



Houzz Inc.



Louisville Tile



Emser Tile - Parelo



Emser Tile - Delia



SICIS



Natural Stone Foundation (NSF)



Contemporary Mosaic Art
CONFERENCE
Albuquerque | March 4-8 2026



Brazilian Natural Stone Association (Centrorochas)

Houzz Inc.'s 2026 Houzz Kitchen Trends Study emphasizes the need to put practical concerns on par with outdated style... The **International Surface Fabricators Association (ISFA)** delivered formal remarks to the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board (Cal/OSHA), urging immediate, collaborative enforcement solutions to stop silica exposure while cautioning against a blanket prohibition that may fail to protect workers...TileWorks of Bucks County and the Tile Heritage Foundation will co-host **TileFest26**, the nationally recognized ceramic tile festival set for May 16–17, 2026, in Doylestown, Pa.... **Louisville Tile** has appointed Chase Sholl, IIDA, as its new Architect & Design (A&D) Representative for the Asheville, N.C., and Johnson City and Knoxville, Tenn., markets...**Emser Tile** has promoted Jim Parelo to President, and current President Carl Delia has assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer...**SICIS** has appointed Francesco Sommariva as Chief Marketing & Growth Officer...The **Natural Stone Foundation (NSF)** has approved \$145,000 in grants to fund strategic initiatives led by the Natural Stone Institute (NSI), reinforcing the foundation's commitment to its three pillars: education and scholarships, standards, and promotion of natural stone...**CMA2 (Contemporary Mosaic Art 2)**, an international community of mosaic artists, will hold its 2026 members conference, "Connecting Mosaic Artists: Building Community," March 4–8 in Albuquerque, N.M...The **Brazilian Natural Stone Association (Centrorochas)** reported that 2025 marked an all-time-high performance of the Brazilian natural stone industry, which reached US\$1.48 billion in exports, an increase of 17.5% in revenue compared to 2024.

| | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Alpha Professional Tools _____ | alpha-tools.com..... | 25 |
| Ceramic Tile Education Foundation _____ | ceramictilefoundation.com..... | 57 |
| Coverings _____ | coverings.com..... | inside front cover - page 1 |
| Custom Building Products _____ | custombuildingproducts.com | 11 |
| Daltile _____ | daltile.com..... | 39 |
| Johns Manville _____ | jm.com/en/goboard..... | 13 |
| MAPEI _____ | mapei.com | 14, 32, 56 |
| MAPEI _____ | mapei.com | centerspread 34-35 |
| NTCA _____ | tile-assn.com | 23, 68 - inside back cover |
| NTCA TileTV _____ | youtube.com/c/NationalTileContractorsAssociation | 23 |
| Progress Profiles America Inc. _____ | progressprofiles.com | 7 |
| RTC Products _____ | rtcproducts.com | 51 |
| Schluter Systems, L.P. _____ | schluter.com | 9 |
| Tile Council of North America, Inc. _____ | tcnatile.com | 43, 49 |
| Wonder Porcelain _____ | wonderporcelain.com | 45 |

National Tile Contractors Association

ELEVATE YOUR CRAFT. SECURE YOUR FUTURE.

In an industry where precision is paramount, every mistake costs you. The NTCA equips you with the most comprehensive technical standards and installation training in the industry. As part of your membership, you receive the *NTCA Reference Manual* – a definitive guide to help you navigate complex installations, avoid costly errors, and ensure every job meets the highest industry standards.

- ✓ **Access Instant Answers:** On-demand technical support and documented best practices.
- ✓ **Reduce Costly Errors:** Minimize callbacks and protect your reputation.
- ✓ **Install with Confidence:** Stay ahead of new materials, standards and advanced techniques.

Join Now



www.tile-assn.com



**Membership
isn't a cost; it's
an investment that pays for
itself through unmatched
installation training, technical
expertise, and support that
only the
"Voice of the Tile Contractor"
can provide.**

TileLetter

**More Than Just a Magazine:
Your Strategic Partner in the Tile Industry.**

In a competitive market, reaching the right audience is crucial. *TileLetter* offers a unique advantage: a dedicated readership of tile contractors actively engaged in their profession. We provide a platform for manufacturers, distributors, and product innovators to connect directly with the individuals who specify and use their products.



- **Targeted Reach:** Eliminate wasted marketing spend by focusing on your core customer base.
- **Industry Authority:** Align your brand with a trusted source of information.
- **Lasting Impact:** Your message stays with readers long after they've turned the page.

Elevate your brand visibility and drive sales. Partner with *TileLetter* – the essential resource for tile contractors.

Contact the TileLetter Team at sales@tileletter.com to secure your ad placement today!