



Ask the Experts

QUESTION:

I know movement joints are important, but with the advent of so many crack isolation membranes and products, I wonder under what conditions movement joints need to be planned and installed for floors and walls.

ANSWER:

Expansion joints have been a topic of major concern in the tile industry for a long time – and continue to be, due to the necessity of them and their appearance in a finished installation.

There are products available that can help in relocating some movement joints to a more suitable place, but a common misunderstanding about crack isolation membranes is that they eliminate the need for expansion joints. They don't! Without sufficient movement accommodation, risk of delam-

inating or “tenting” – tile popping off the substrate – is very high.

Even though the architect, builder, or design professional must specify movement joints and show locations and details on drawings, this often goes undone in both residential and commercial settings. It is extremely important to notify the person responsible if this has not been specified.

The *TCA Handbook for Ceramic Tile Installation* has a section called



“Movement Joints – Vertical and Horizontal – EJ171” (page 78-80 in the 2009 version). This section gives a tremendous amount of information. It recommends movement joint placement every 20 to 25 feet in each direction for interior dry installations not exposed to sunlight and placement of movement joints every 8 to 12 feet in each direction for exteriors or interior sexposed to direct sunlight or moisture.

Other essential guidelines include installations of movement joints where tile work abuts restraining surfaces such as perimeter walls, dissimilar floors, curbs, columns, pipes, ceilings, and where changes occur in backing materials (but not at drain strainers) and continuing all joints in the structure through the tile work. Be sure

joints through the tilework directly over structural joints are not narrower than the structural joint. The *TCA Handbook* details range from guidelines, expansion joint width, preparation, materials, and installation information.

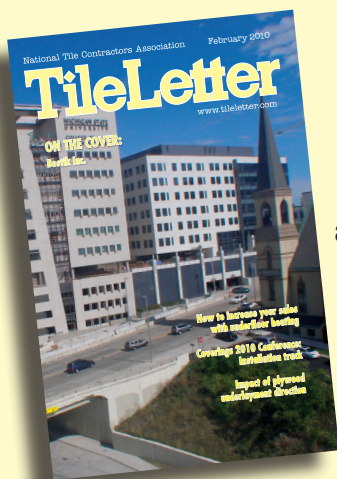
There are many types of expansion joint materials available from several manufacturers that offer “build your own” options to pre-made systems.

– GERALD SLOAN,
NTCA training director

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