

# Selecting a Professional Tile Installer

## How do I find a professional installer?

The vast majority of tile applications require the skills of a professional tile installer. The tile contractor can be located from a variety of sources, including the Yellow Pages. This source is quick, but it doesn't offer much assistance in determining the contractor's abilities. A better source is typically the tile retailer or distributor you used when selecting your tile. This retailer may be more familiar with the various local tile contractors and may be able to aid you in selecting a number of contractors who are most qualified to provide service for your particular job.

## Is the installer qualified?

The state of Oklahoma does not require a contractor to be licensed. As the consumer, you should know what to look for and ask about prior to selecting your contractor in order to avoid potential problems.

What to ask:

- Does the installer have a sufficient amount of worker's compensation insurance (for your protection if an accident takes place on your job site)? Lack of insurance can indicate the installer isn't qualified.
- How many years of field experience does the installer possess, specifically your application type? Ceramic tile setting requires unique skills and experience is necessary to be qualified.
- Will the installer show you his work? Check a picture portfolio of past jobs or ask for references. Check if the installer has worked for any key general contractors or developers, an indication that he is good.
- Where did the installer learn his trade? The contractor may be under-qualified if it wasn't from an accredited trade school, apprenticeship program or extensive training under a licensed or reputable contracting firm.

Remember that the professional contractor has nothing to hide and is usually proud to show off his past jobs. Cheaper is not always better. Good quality craftsmanship is higher in cost, so a low bid is not always best.

## Consider this...

Be informed of the state's contracting laws, lien laws and legal ramifications of the laws on both parties. Be certain the contract explicitly spells out all items included or excluded per discussions. Review timing, method of installation, price, material and grout selections, cleaning and finishing procedures, etc.

To make bidding fair, make all requirements the same for all competing contractors and any alterations made should be directly communicated to all parties involved.

It is recommended to have at least three (3) contractors bid on the project, but not to award contract solely on price. Qualifications and bid price should be weighed equally.

## Warranty of work

All facets of work should carry a warranty. Materials and workmanship should be included. If the installation requires special steps (i.e. waterproofing) a special warranty should be given to cover any potential damage due to installation or product failure.

Warranties are typically for one year, but there are multi-year guarantees offered on products and services by many manufacturers and contractors. Workmanship warranties should be negotiated and terms settled prior to signing the final contract. It is safe to assume that the competent tile installer will be far more willing to offer extended warranties on his work than someone less qualified.

## Will I be satisfied?

Your satisfaction should be the contractor's first concern.

Completion time and payment schedule should be arranged during negotiations. All work should be reviewed by you, the general contractor (if there is one) and the tile installer during the job as well as at completion. Without this commitment, all parties are liable for improper installations. In-progress inspections should help avoid unfortunate mistakes such as incorrect tile installation, grout color or improper placement of decorative tiles. Many tile suppliers state on their invoices that "installation constitutes acceptance." Check color, shade, style before installation begins.

Before making the final payment, be sure you are 100% satisfied with the work. You should have an amount to retain (10% is standard) from the project cost to guarantee corrections will be made if necessary.

Once final payment is made, obtain proper labor and material releases duly signed by the contractor. This protects against material or mechanics liens for the contractor's lack of payment to his vendors.

### **In conclusion...**

The benefits of paying for quality craftsmanship outweigh the few extra dollars a qualified installer will cost you initially.

Don't be fooled by a low cost. Look for the installer's qualifications and be certain that he is the right man for the job.