NEW TECHNOLOGY PRODUCES MORTARS AND GROUT CONTRACTORS CAN STICK WITH

The next generation of adhesives is here!

By Nancy T. Allender
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Thanks to fundamental changes in the composition of today’s thin-set mortars and grout, commercial remodelers engaged in tile and marble replacement projects are stretching dollars, ending callbacks and enjoying welcome relief. Indeed, with ceramic tile consumption forecast to grow 12 percent annually through 1989, such labor- and cost-saving improvements couldn’t have come at a better time.

Major tile adhesive manufacturers are moving away from standard formulae, as research into the delicate balance between Portland cement and its chemical modifiers brings a new generation of smoother and creamier mortars. These new-technology mortars offer less drag for easier troweling and application—plus more coverage, more pot life, more open time, and more time to reposition tiles. The new mortars also set more quickly and can hold larger, heavier tiles on the wall.

By contrast, open pots of standard mortar “skin over” quickly—while the sandy, “weight” consistency is difficult to trowel and leaves only 15-20 minutes for repositioning tile. If tile readjustment is required due to substrate variances or inexact tile sizes, applicators must often break the bond, lift the tile, back-butter and replace it.

Increased Coverage & Speed

Today’s dry-powder mortars use state-of-the-art equipment to pre-blend resin and other chemical modifiers. These chemicals, combined with carefully controlled gradation aggregates and Portland cement, produce an easy-handling material with greater coverage, less weight and improve bond performance.

Add water to the mix, and these mortars provide up to one-fifth more coverage than conventional, sanded thin-set mortars of equal weight. Live demonstrations and actual job experiences have shown thousands of contractors these smooth, creamy mortars can trowel 20 percent further on the jobsite without additional weight.

By providing longer open times and faster strength gain, the new mortar and grout products enable contractors to dramatically reduce time spent at the jobsite—and thus boost customer satisfaction as well.

New-technology mortars and grouts cover one-fifth more area than conventional adhesives of the same weight—and also set faster and stronger.
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If, for example, ceramic floor tile is installed in a fast-food restaurant, each day closed represents potentially thousands of dollars in lost sales. However, new mortar and grout products cure fast and hard, so floor traffic can begin less than one day after grout application. In these fast turn-around situations, tile customers are willing to pay extra for accelerator ingredients in adhesive products, since it means opening for business sooner.

Faster turnaround can also be achieved in the planning stages, as resin-modified “flexible” mortars have been developed to simplify product specifications by architects or contractors. Resin-modified mortars incorporate premeasured amounts of spray-dried latex, thereby eliminating costly liquid additive mixing errors. With the simple addition of water to these resin-modified mortars, tile contractors achieve superior bonds of virtually any ceramic tile over a wide variety of substrates, including exterior-grade plywood.

**Mortars for All Ceramic Tile**

New thin-set mortar formulations meet or exceed American National Standards for either Dry-Set or Latex-Portland Cement mortar (A118.1-1985 or A118.4-1985) and can be used for installing all types of ceramic wall or floor tiles—including mosaics, soft bisque, quarry, monocottura, marble, pavers and other vitreous and semi-vitreous tiles in both interior and exterior applications.

What other adhesive advancements can we expect? Within the next five years, a wave of new adhesive and grout-related products will descend on the market for virtually any building need. Ease of application will be the most important consideration, as contractors and do-it-yourselfers demand one-step product preparation and one-step application.

Tile failures due to concrete substrate fractures will become only bad memories as advancements in adhesive technology will permit substrate settling and lateral movement beneath the tile.

Segment growth in the glue-down carpet market has prompted new advancements in flooring adhesives as well. While overall carpet sales are growing at a 4 percent annual rate, sales for carpet Stalled using adhesives continue to grow at 7-8 percent annually. Products that are easier to use, and provide fast tack and greater bond strength, will continue to fuel the expansion of this market segment.

Commercial remodeling contractors benefit economically by keeping up-to-date about product advancements. Informed remodelers will clearly see how today’s new adhesives lead to improved installations and greater long-term cost savings.

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