

## HOW A CERAMIC TILE INSTALLATION IS PRICED

*Many factors are involved in pricing a tile installation, and the labor price per square foot is a variable.*

### THE "ONE SIZE FITS ALL" MYTH

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We sometimes receive calls from people who want to know what we charge "per square foot" for tile installation, and want us to give them a "ballpark" figure for their installation over the phone. Here is why we cannot do this:

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#### **1. A professional tile installation is not priced simply on a "per square foot" basis.**

This is because such a "one size fits all" pricing method does not cover all the variables in tile installation. And, I know of no *professional* tile people (keyword, "professional") that would do this. A handyman might or a carpenter might; but you are not getting an experienced professional, and you don't know what you're going to end up with. The "big box" stores will too, but look carefully at their disclaimers and contracts. Their price will not include prep work or other work deemed necessary, and they do not do any custom work.

While square footage is a factor in working up an estimate, it is not the *only* factor, and the labor price per square foot is a variable.

#### **2. What are we to install? It is impossible to provide an accurate estimate without knowing what the tile to be installed is.**

This means not only the size, but the type. We actually have to see the tile. What does the back look like? Often, no tile has yet been selected when we receive a call. If not, there is simply no way to estimate the job. Large format tile is more difficult to install than a 12 inch tile, and will cost more in terms of labor. Large format tile may also require considerable additional prep work (job site condition).

Patterns will cost more per square foot to install than a straight layout, and diagonal layout also costs more because of the considerable extra layout and cutting time involved.

Different tile requires different mortar, and therefore until a tile is chosen, there is an unknown cost. Not only this, but we need to see what the back of the tile looks like to determine how much mortar will be required to achieve proper coverage. Also, "Builders Grade" (that's French for "cheap") tile is more difficult to install because it is not flat, but is usually thin and warped, and therefore will require utmost care to (hopefully) ensure a lasting installation. Promotional tiles from the

“big box” stores fall into this category. They are cheap tiles of poor quality, and if we agree to install them at all (which we usually won't) it will be at a higher price than for a quality tile, simply to cover the extra time and aggravation to try to make it look good, which it usually won't no matter what we do.

**3. Job site condition is another a factor.** Without seeing the jobsite, no one can give you an accurate quotation. What type of subfloor do you have? What is it's condition? Is it suitable for tile? Will a layer of plywood be needed first? Does the old flooring need to come up? What is the shape of the room (difficulty and amount of cutting required is what's important here). How flat is the floor? Large tile will not tolerate a floor that is not absolutely flat. Do any doors need to be trimmed?

There are many other factors to be considered also, and all factors must be known before an accurate estimate can be worked up. Someone may want a decorative border inserted. No tile professional is going to install this for free.

**No professional tile contractor will give you a price over the phone.**

If someone quotes you a price over the phone, you can bet that they have little or no experience in tile installation. It is likely they are simply a “handyman”, or an out of work construction worker. When construction is slow, everyone thinks that they can set tile; but, as it is often said, “you get what you pay for”.

Anyone who is seriously considering tile and looking for a professional installation will want an accurate estimate, and this can only be achieved by visiting the jobsite. Anything less is simply a wild guess, and is therefore meaningless.