



THE TILE
ASSOCIATION

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Tiling with mesh backed products

The Tile Association's Technical Committee has been made aware of an increasing use of ceramic and stone mesh backed tiles and slabs in the UK.

It is important that any tile retailer/distributor ensures that any products they sell are "fit for purpose" under the requirements of the Sale of Goods Act. This same responsibility will apply to the tiling contractor who specifies or ultimately sells the product to the customer.

The products referred to in this document have a mesh adhered to the back of the ceramic or natural stone with resin/ glue and no information is provided on the type or quality of the mesh and the resin/glue. In some cases most or even all of the back of the tile or slab is covered by the application of the mesh and the resin/glue.

Effectively this means that when the tile or slab has to be adhered the adhesive used to fix the tile has to adhere to the back of the tile or slab that has a backing which is completely unknown and untested.

Dependent upon service conditions, the type of backing used may have a significant impact upon performance i.e. adhesion bond strengths may be reduced in external or wet duty applications or in areas where thermal movement is a consideration. For example, some resins have a high coefficient of thermal expansion. It is also important to note that the coefficient of thermal expansion of the mesh back and its resin/glue may be higher than the tile or natural stone tile/ slab to which it is attached.

The British Standard Code of Practice for fixing wall and floor tiles, BS5385 advises for even small mosaics that any mesh backing and the glue should not cover more than 25% of the underside of the mosaic tesserae. This is because it is important that the tile adhesive achieves sufficient contact with the underside of the mosaic tesserae as well as the background to which the mosaics are being fixed so that good long term adhesion is ensured. Where 100% of the back of the tile or slab is covered with a mesh backing, it must be appreciated that the tile adhesive is no longer bonding directly to the tile itself, therefore selection of the correct tile adhesive becomes essential.

There are no standards for mesh backed tiles and slabs and frequently these products are supplied with no information on the composition of the mesh resin/glue,