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Technical Advice Note 3

Grouting High Gloss Glazed Wall Tiles

Most glazed wall tiles do not show any surface scratching when the appropriate grouts are used to grout the tile joints using the recommended grouting tools. Some of the high gloss glazes, particularly the deep coloured glazes, are more prone to scratching during the grouting procedure by hard particles in the grout mortar. It is therefore advisable to exercise caution when grouting high gloss glazed ceramic wall tiles to avoid scratching the glazed surface.

The likelihood of the tile glaze being scratched depends upon several factors:

- ◆ the size and hardness of the filler/aggregate in the grout mortar
- ◆ the hardness of the glaze on the tile
- ◆ the tools used for the application of the grout

The Code of Practice for internal ceramic wall tiling, BS 5385-1, recommends the appropriate techniques in clause 4.3. The grout mortar should be applied over the surface using a soft rubber grouting squeegee or grouting trowel until the joints are completely filled. The area being grouted should be such that it can be completed within the working time of the grout mortar. Surplus grout should be removed from the face of the tiles with the grouting squeegee or grouting trowel and a damp, not wet sponge. Once the grout has hardened and dried sufficiently any fine residues on the face of the tiles can be polished off using a clean, dry cloth.

The use of a hard application tool, e.g. a steel trowel or rigid plastic applicator, is more likely to cause scratching of the tile glaze than the use of a soft application tool such as a soft rubber squeegee.

Pre-mixed proprietary grouts meeting the requirements of BS EN 13888 rather than site mixed cement and sand grouts are recommended. Note that the proprietary grouts designed for narrow tile joints tend to have finer fillers and generally are less likely to scratch the tile glaze. If doubt exists regarding the likelihood of the proposed grout scratching the tile glaze always carry out a trial application.

The Tile Association recommends that advice on suitable grouting materials should be sought from a TTA manufacturer, supplier or contractor.