

## Construction and Extraction

### Tile and Marble Setters

**Tile and Marble Setters** lay floor coverings in homes, offices, hospitals, stores, restaurants, and many other types of buildings. Tile also may be installed on walls and ceilings. Carpet, tile, and other types of floor coverings not only serve an important basic function in buildings, but their decorative qualities contribute to the appeal of the buildings. Tile installers, tile setters, and marble setters apply hard tile and marble to floors, walls, ceilings, countertops, patios, and roof decks. Tile and marble are durable, impervious to water, and easy to clean, making them a popular building material in bathrooms, kitchens, hospitals, and commercial buildings.

Prior to installation, tile setters use measuring devices, spacers, and levels to ensure that the tile is placed in a consistent manner. Tiles vary in color, shape, and size, with their sides ranging from 1 inch to 24 or more inches in length, so tile setters sometimes prearrange tiles on a dry floor according to the planned design. This allows them to examine the pattern, check that they have enough of each type of tile, and determine where they will have to cut tiles to fit the design in the available space. Tile setters cut tiles with a machine saw or a special cutting tool to cover all exposed areas, including corners and around pipes, tubs, and wash basins. To set tile on a flat, solid surface, such as drywall, concrete, plaster, or wood, tile setters first use a tooth-edged trowel to spread a “thin set”- a thin layer of either cement adhesive or “mastic,” which is a very sticky paste. They then properly position the tile and gently tap the surface with the trowel handle, a rubber mallet, or a small block of wood to set the tile evenly and firmly. Spacers are used to maintain exact distance between tiles, and any excess thin set is wiped off the tile immediately after placement.

Marble setters cut and set marble slabs on floors and walls of buildings. They trim and cut marble to specified sizes using a power wet saw, other electric cutting equipment, or hand tools. After setting the marble in place, the workers polish the marble to a high luster using power tools or by hand.

By the time workers install flooring, or tile in a new structure, the majority of construction has been completed and the work area is relatively clean and uncluttered. Installing these materials is labor intensive; workers spend much of their time bending, kneeling, and reaching - activities that require endurance. The work can be very hard on workers' knees; therefore, safety regulations often require that they wear kneepads. They may frequently move heavy furniture, which requires strength and can be physically exhausting and hard on workers' backs. Tile and marble setters may be exposed to fumes from various kinds of glue and are usually required to wear safety goggles when using certain equipment.

Tile and marble setters usually work indoors and have regular daytime hours. However, when floor covering installers need to work in occupied stores or offices, they may work evenings and weekends to avoid disturbing customers or employees.

## **Education/Training**

### *How to Obtain:*

A high school diploma is not required. Many individuals learn on the job as helpers or laborers. Skills are learned as the worker increases their experience on the job. Another option is to join an apprenticeship program, which typically lasts between 3 and 4 years. Apprenticeship programs can be found through contractors or organizations such as Finishing Trades Institute. There are several recognized apprenticeable specialties associated with this occupation including Mosaic Worker and Tile Setter.

To enter the Terrazzo, Tile and Marble Trade School Inc. (TTMTS) apprentice program requirements are:

- Physical dexterity and strength (some of a tile, natural stone and terrazzo tradesperson's work involves lifting and working with heavy tools and equipment)
- Math skills (to calculate and work with specifications and measurements)
- Minimum Grade 10 although Grade 12 is recommended
- English (spoken and written)
- Completed application
- All Trade School applicants are invited to be interviewed by a committee, consisting of Trade School administration, Union and Ministry people

### *More Information on Apprenticeship Programs:*

- Finishing Trades Institute Apprenticeships:  
<http://www.finishingtradesinstitute.org/apprenticeship.htm>
- Tile Marble Terrazzo Union:  
<http://www.tileunion.org/>
- Terrazzo, Tile and Marble Trade School Inc. (TTMTS):  
<http://www.ttmgo.org/tradeSchool.html>
- Employment Development Department:  
<http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/construction/const-tile-marble-setters.pdf>

### *Average Costs:*

Apprenticeship programs generally do not charge the apprentice for classroom instruction, provided the apprentice maintains employment with a contractor affiliated with the apprenticeship program, throughout the apprenticeship period of 3 to 4 years.