



Cement Grout Troubleshooting

Guide

TDS 201

Complaint	Cause(s)	Prevention	Potential Solutions
Weak, powdery grout joint	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Too much water (liquid) used in mix. Grout dried out too fast due to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> highly absorbent tiles high temperature (>85°F), low humidity (<50%RH). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mix must be firm not soupy. Do not re-temper grout after initial mixing. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-wet tiles to reduce absorption. Use latex additive or damp cure for 72 hours with Kraft paper per Tile Council of North America guidelines. 	<p>Attempt to re-hydrate the grout by damp curing the grout for 72 hours. The use of a grout sealer may also help to harden the grout.</p>
White powder on surface	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Efflorescence due to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Damp slab or grouting too soon after setting Too much water used in mix Too much water used during clean up Hard water or water softened with salt Cement laitance due to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Too much water used in mix Too much water used during clean up 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slab on grade must be > 7 days old. Slab on grade should be tested for moisture using polyethylene. If moisture detected, a vapor barrier must be used under mortar bed. Under damp, cool conditions never grout within 24 hours of setting. Thick beds and narrow joints require longer drying time to avoid efflorescence. Mix must be firm not soupy. The single most common cause of grout shade/color problems. If water quality is suspect, conduct A test area. Use only potable (drinking) water or latex additive for mixing grout. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Both causes result in a porous matrix where fine particles of sand and cement float to surface, leaving whitish deposit. 	<p>Use a stiff bristle brush or scrub pad and a light solution of STONETECH® Restore™ Acidic Cleaner to clean the deposits. Several cleanings may be required until the salts work their way through the installation system. Conduct a test area to verify results. Do not use acidic cleaners on marble, limestone or travertine surfaces. Mask off and protect metal or other surfaces prior to mixing and using acidic cleaners.</p>
Color shading over surface	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Too much water used during clean up Too much water used in mix Cleaning too soon after installation with excess water Uneven grout depth Uneven absorption of tiles with partially glazed edges or self-spacing lugs Non-uniform drying conditions Use of different production batches of grout Inconsistent liquid to powder ratio used with multiple batches. Poor quality water: discolored, hard, softened with salt, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Use minimum amount of water to reduce pigment loss during clean up. Mix must be firm not soupy, reducing any pigment float. Allow grout to take initial set to lock in pigment. Rake excess adhesive mortar out of joints to achieve uniform depth. Pre-wet highly absorbent tiles by sponging surface. Shade areas exposed to sunlight, avoid direct ventilation drafts. Check batch # to insure all grout from same batch # or pre-blend bags of grout. Use the same amount of liquid and powder for multiple batches. Use measuring equipment if necessary. Use only potable (drinking) water or latex additive for mixing grout. 	<p>Try one of the following: Using a grout sealer may even out the color. “wet-look” or “enhancer” type sealers (e.g. STONETECH® Enhancer Sealer) can deepen and even out the final grout color. Use a grout colorant to stain / seal the grout joints. These products can be custom matched to all the LATICRETE Grout Colors. Conduct a test area to verify results.</p>

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Cracking of grout joints	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excess water in mix 2. Flexural movement of substrate (wood) 3. Building movement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce amount of water in mix and clean up procedure, 2 & 3. Ensure substrate is in compliance with local codes, Tile Council of North America and other industry guidelines 	<p>If cracking is due to shrinkage of the grout, at times the use of a grout colorant can be used to “fill” in the small hairline fissures. If the cracking is due to movement in the structure, a review of the structure should be conducted to ensure that it complies with industry standards. If the structure does not meet industry standards, the required “stiffening” of the structure should be made prior to making grout joint repairs. When re grouting, remove at least half the depth of the existing grout joint down to firm and stable grout, then clean thoroughly prior to re-grouting.</p>
Joint color is lighter than sample	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grout dries too fast. Not properly cured. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When temperatures exceed 90°F (32°C) use latex admixture or damp cure for 72 hours with Kraft paper per Tile Council of North America guidelines. 	<p>Using a “wet” look or “enhancer” type sealer (e.g. STONETECH® Enhancer Sealer) will deepen the grout color or grout colorant.</p>

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