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Total Circulation **11,470**

Getting back to basics

The continued trend towards additional bathrooms, shower rooms, en suites and toilets combined with the ever increasing use of ceramic tiles could lead to serious problems for homeowners in the future if contractors do not use products appropriate for the job.

Steve Twin, European Technical Manager for James Hardie Europe, comments: "While tile technology and design has made major leaps forward in the recent years many remain unaware that there have been similar leaps forward in the technology which supports them."

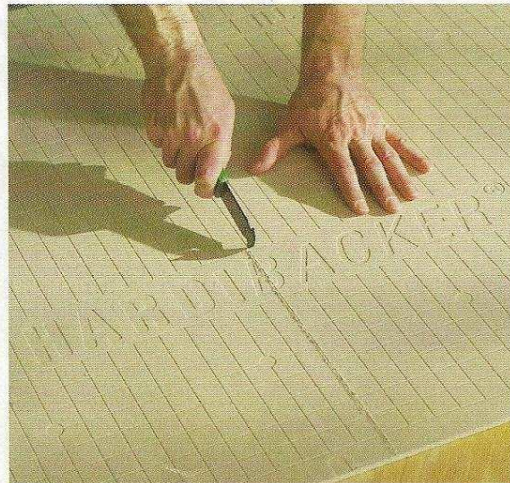
In the UK tiles are generally fixed to plywood, chipboard or, in the case of walls, plasterboard, however none of these materials are naturally water resistant. They all need special treatment either on or off-site and there is a risk that if they become wet they can lose cohesion, grow mould, swell and eventually dislodge the tiles fixed to them.

Some contractors try and get round this by using exterior grade plywood or moisture resistant plasterboard. While this may work for a while there is still a risk that these materials will degrade if water does get through. Because this is not immediately evident (due to the damage being hidden by the tiles) the problem can be quite far advanced by the time the homeowner recognises that there is an issue. This can result in the need for major repairs at significant cost particularly as adjoining materials can be affected. This can be a particular problem in apartment buildings where the degradation of the tile backing in one apartment could have a significant and costly impact on several others.

But it doesn't have to be like this!

While tile technology has advanced so to have backing solutions. Contractors can opt now for fibre cement backing products such as HardieBacker™ cement board, which have been designed specifically for use in bathroom areas.

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does not degrade and deteriorate even when it is bearing the load of heavy modern tiles such as granite or slate. What this means is that installers and homeowners can enjoy peace of mind when installing their tiles. As well as being unaffected by water, fibre cement backer boards, such as HardieBacker™ cement board, require no further treatment prior to delivery or installation. They are also very easy to install, provide a very firm, stable surface for the tiles, have good impact resistance and also contribute to sound and fire insulation.

According to Steve there is big opportunity for contractors in the UK to use fibre cement backer board. He says: "There is a growing awareness of the need for water resistant backer board in wet areas and this is reflected in increasing direct-to-consumer sales of HardieBacker™ cement board."