

STEAM SHOWERS 101

Torino Tile to the Rescue

By Margaret Anne Fehr | Photography by Duality Photographic

EVERY HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECT embodies the 'Cinderella' makeover effect: the end goal being to invest time and money to magically transform a worn and needy part of the home into a thing of beauty and hopefully live happily ever after with the final result.

That's the goal, but there are times when the familiar fairy tale falls short - the company or individual hired for the job turns out to be less than a charming prince and the process grinds to a halt. Or worse, the project is completed but is a far cry from industry standards while dashing client expectations in the process.

That was the scenario for Marilyn and Lloyd who had hired a tile installer to replace the dated, chronically leaking steam shower in their main bathroom. The projected two week job stretched into two months and

when close to being finished, the couple realized that the workmanship was simply sub-par. When Marilyn contacted Torino Tile to enquire about hiring them to "fix" the previous contractor's work, owner Sandra Nelson recalls the distress in Marilyn's voice about the failed project and her concerns about improper materials being used.

Sandra and husband Wayne confirmed the couple's difficult reality with a site visit. "Sandra and Wayne walked us through the many deficiencies and what needed to be done to bring the shower up to industry code specifications," says Marilyn.



LEFT
A lesser known but important requirement that was missing in the original shower was the use of movement joints in the shower stall.

RIGHT
"Aesthetics are extremely important aspects of tiling for us at Torino Tile," says Sandra. "As the poor layout of the tile was Marilyn's initial concern with the previous install, it was essential to have an overall symmetrical look with no awkward placements or small cuts."

The couple also came to the realization that building a steam shower calls for a professional skill set with a great deal of technical knowledge that goes far beyond installing tile in an ordinary shower.

Sandra explained, "Steam showers are enclosed and constantly filled with vapor. The use of vapour retardants and waterproof materials are critical. Without these products, or even the use of these products but being installed incorrectly, can literally cause tens of thousands of dollars' worth of water damage down the road. Mold growth, damage to framing in wall cavities and transferring water damage to adjacent floors and ceilings is inevitable if moisture is not controlled properly. Sadly, the previously finished project did not come close to meeting those specifications. It was destined to fail in a relatively short period, and had to be torn out and completely redone from scratch."

The solution was to install the integrated Schluter® Shower System to ensure complete waterproof integrity. Torino Tile's owner Wayne and master installer Brennan, who both hold Schluter System Certification, used Schluter's KERDI-BOARD for the walls and ceiling and KERDI-SHOWER-ST pre-sloped tray for the floor. All seams were sealed with Schluter KERDI-BAND and KERDI-SEALS and KERDI-FIX was used around all fixtures to prevent vapour penetration. The installation of a lighting fixture specified for the use in a steam shower was also installed.

Other specifications included installing a sloped ceiling of 150 mm per 1000 mm to avoid condensation from dripping onto the occupants while they are enjoying the steam shower and the addition of ridged polystyrene insulation to the walls.

Lloyd adds, "The original shower didn't have insulation in the walls and we had no idea that it was something you should do. What a difference it made! We've already noticed how much better the steam unit holds heat."

A lesser known but important requirement that was missing in the original shower was the use of movement joints in the shower stall. "We used Schluter DILEX, which is a prefabricated joint installed on all changes in plane, including floor/wall, wall/wall and wall/ceiling transitions," says Sandra. "These are



TOP

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BOTTOM

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designed to accommodate continuing movement in the structure due to thermal expansion and contraction from the heat. These joints assist in the prevention of tile delamination and cracking caused by this movement. We were also able to select a color in this material that matched the grout and tile color so perfectly you don't even realize they are there."

The shower interior was brought up to speed with quality 12" x 24" full body porcelain tiles in 'Regal Taupe' on both walls and ceiling along with a matching 2" x 2" shower floor tiles. "The installation was done in a contemporary 'grid pattern' which required a dedication of time to design the perfect layout," says Sandra. "Our design team wanted to ensure that the pattern flowed with all the adjoining walls in both the tub area and shower including the ceiling."

"Aesthetics are extremely important aspects of tiling for us at Torino Tile," says Sandra. "As the poor layout of the tile was Marilyn's initial concern with the previous install, it was essential to have an overall symmetrical look with no awkward placements or small cuts." The tiles were installed using a premium Ardex X77 mortar and maintenance-free Ardex Epoxy Grouts ensuring the customers years of maintenance-free use and durability.

"The original shower was done in marble," says Lloyd. "We've since found out that this is not the most suitable product to use in a steam shower. I couldn't scrub it and you must use specific stone cleansers on it. It's a really nice treat to have the proper tiles in the shower that can be cleaned with simple household cleaners."

After some hard-learned lessons, Marilyn and Lloyd are now happily enjoying their new steam shower thanks to Torino Tile's knowledge and commitment to quality and customer service.

"They were so very professional from start to finish and completed the job in 10 business days. You wouldn't even know there was work going on in the house, they were so clean and professional. They had a detailed plan and kept us posted on the progress. I initially told Sandra that I didn't think I'd ever be able to enjoy this bathroom again, but now I love it!" Marilyn enthuses.

"We are very pleased and would use them in a heartbeat for future projects. We would not hesitate to refer them to family and friends knowing that they would get the same professional workmanship and approach that we received."