READY TO INSPECT — STANDARD FIELD GUIDE

ANSI A108 / TCNA tile standards

American National Standards Institute / Tile Council of North America

The ANSI A108 series and the TCNA handbook together describe how ceramic and stone tile is installed. They cover how flat the substrate must be before tile goes down, how mortar or adhesive is spread and how much of the tile back it must wet, and where the assembly needs a movement joint. Most tile callbacks trace back to a substrate that was never flat enough, a bond coat that only touched the tile at the corners, or a hard grout joint run wall-to-wall with nowhere to move.

What it covers

- Substrate flatness, deflection and preparation before setting
- Waterproofing and crack-isolation membranes at wet and moving areas
- Mortar and adhesive selection, open time and back coverage
- Movement and expansion joints at changes of plane and perimeters
- Lippage, grout joint width and finished-surface tolerance

What a field inspection looks at

- Substrate flatness checked with a straightedge and shown in frame before tile hides it, not asserted after the fact.
- A tile pulled and flipped during setting to photograph actual mortar coverage on the back, the honest test of a bond coat.
- Movement joints photographed where the layout calls for them, kept soft rather than filled solid with grout.
- Lippage across finished joints checked at the light-grazed walls where it shows, with the reading visible.
- Membrane at showers and floors documented before the tile goes over it, since after cover it can only be trusted, not seen.

Adoption varies by jurisdiction. Confirm the edition your authority having jurisdiction enforces before you run a walk against it.