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TILE INSTALLATION TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION INITIATIVE IN MEXICO

Tile Council of North America (TCNA) and its Mexican members have joined together to build a national tile installation training program (Instalación de Recubrimientos Cerámicos) in Mexico designed to educate and train tile installers and help them obtain government certification. According to Eric Astrachan, Executive Director of the Tile Council of North America, "There has been outstanding interest from installers and those interested in becoming installers, as every available slot for the next few classes is currently booked."

This is the first national tile training school ever developed in Mexico and is the result of a substantial investment by TCNA, its Mexican members, and CECATI, Mexico's technical training school. Together, they provided in excess of US \$100K to build the first of many training centers. "We started with an empty building provided by CECATI, drew up plans, raised the money for our improvements, hired a contractor, and equipped the facility with products donated by TCNA members," explained Fernando Lozano Assad, Director of TCNA-Mexico.

"The industry will benefit greatly from having more and better trained installers," continued Mr. Assad. "It will also mean fewer job failures and time spent redoing improper installations. Participants benefit in several ways from this training. They receive hands-on experience with a variety of tiles and installation products. Also, those who successfully complete the course receive a diploma from CECATI. They will need this to apply and be tested for official certification from CONOCER."

CONOCER, the Consejo Nacional de Normalización y Certificación de Competencias Laborales, is a government organization that works for the Mexican Secretary of Education (SEP). TCNA-Mexico is developing the certification methodology that will allow students to be evaluated by CONOCER.

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“Once they pass the certification test from CONOCER, they receive a card (credential) with their photo, ID number, and the school logo,” continued Mr. Assad.

“The program does more than simply educate the participants; it also promotes them as certified installers and includes them in a database that will be available where tile is sold. In doing so, we simultaneously generate employment opportunities and work towards achieving the best possible installations”, added Victor Almeida, TCNA President.

Monterrey, in the north of Mexico, is the first city in which this installation instruction is taking place. Additional facilities are planned for Mexico City, Guadalajara, Chihuahua, Toluca and Aguascalientes, beginning in 2008.

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