# **Ditra and Tiling: 4 things you should know**

Ditra is the mat that is mostly used to tile on the surfaces that cannot bear movement, deflection and moisture. These surfaces when exposed to these conditions after tiling results in the cracking of the tiles. MDF, OSB, plywood are some of the best examples of such surfaces. So in order to maintain the integrity of tiles after installation, Ditra mat is used to avoid any risk of tiles cracking. But the procedure for tiling over the Ditra mat is a little bit different from tiling on the other surfaces when it comes to mixing and spreading the thin-set over the Ditra surface.

At the end of this article, you will be able to understand the advantages of Ditra and you will also learn some tips that will help you to tile on the Ditra mat properly. Through this article, you will also learn about how you can use the Ditra heat and what measures you must take before tiling over it.

## **Walking on Ditra before Tiling**

**The Ditra is designed in such a way that its material allows protection against the excessive movement and deflection when weight is applied on the surface. Because of its structure, it neutralizes the deflection and bends thus eliminating the chances of tiles cracking. Other than these Ditra provides water proofing, vapor management and load distribution.**

**When excessive load is applied on the Ditra surface after installation, the load is transferred to the substrate through the cavity. Also the Ditra-set only takes 25 to 30 minutes to dry. So because of all the above advantages that Ditra provides, you can walk on the Ditra surface before tiling or even right after installing the Ditra.**

Ditra is composed for the installation of ceramic and other stone tiles to make the tile installation durable so that it lasts for long period of time. Along with these, they are also widely used to tile over the MDF, OSB and other surfaces. Since in today’s world, construction is becoming light weighted like the tiles we use in our house during installation are very challenging to maintain. There is always a risk of tile cracking because of the extra humidity, moisture and load distribution. So in order to maintain the integrity of the tiles, Ditra is designed to perform these multiple functions for tiles durability and maintenance.

The installation of Ditra is not as simple as it looks and it requires patience, practice and guide through which you can help yourself for Ditra installation. So first of all, clean the surface you are planning of installing Ditra and clear the surface from the dust and debris. In the next step, measure the length and width of the surface and cut the Ditra according to the measured length. If there are any pillars inside the room then instead of measuring the surface, lay the Ditra on the floor and cut it according to the surface requirements. Try to cut some extra from the required and as straight as possible. Also it is very easy to cut the Ditra from the back so keep this in mind during cutting.

Now it’s time to install the Ditra on the surface. For this purpose, mix the Ditra-set according to the instructions given on the manual and let it slake for some time so that the water completely penetrate the dry ingredients. Then remix the Ditra-set couple of times and spread it on the surface. Ditra-set only takes 25 to 30 minutes to completely set so only mix that quantity of Ditra-set which is required for the surface.

Now spread the Ditra-set over the surface and try to keep the quantity even and flat using the trowel. Do not spread too much Ditra-set over the entire surface because it will dry before spreading it over the whole surface. Keep the surface even and avoid any bumps.

Finally, it’s time to lay the Ditra mat over the Ditra-set and try to keep the pieces of Ditra from overlapping in order to avoid any height difference. Then apply some pressure on the Ditra to maintain the firm grip between the Ditra and Ditra-set. For this purpose, you can use a grout float to make the complete contact between the mortar and Ditra. Always start from the center and move towards the sides pressing the wrinkles outward.

After laying the Ditra over the surface, again mix the Ditra-set following the above procedure. After a couple of mixing, spread the Ditra-set over the Ditra and using trowel fill the Ditra cavities. Carefully spread the mortar evenly and avoid lumps. Now your surface is ready for tiling. You can tile the surface right now or you can tile it some other time and let it dry.

## **Ditra Mat Tiling**

**First of all, mix the unmodified thin-set and spread it over the Ditra mat. Then by using the flat end of trowel fill the gaps or the cavity on the Ditra mat to the top. Then through the notched trowel make even rows of thin-set on the Ditra mat. Then put the mortar at the back of the tile and place it on the mat to maintain the strong bond between the tiles and the surface. Complete the whole row by following the same procedure and then move to the second row.**

Ditra is mostly used for tiling on the surfaces like MDF, OSB, and Plywood that cannot hold the tiles. These surfaces offers a lot of movement and deflection when pressure is applied on them and because of these bends, they result in cracking of the tiles. When Ditra is laid over these surfaces for tiling, it absorbs the stress that cause the cracks in tiles. When the substrate moves because of the weight, the Ditra prevents the movement from transferring through by flexing with it and by doing so it avoids the risk of tile cracking.

After installing the Ditra mat, you can tile the surface right after matting or you can wait according to your schedule. Tile installation on the Ditra is same as tiling on any other surface except for spreading the thin-set. So in order to tile over the Ditra mat you need to use the flat side of trowel to cover the whole area evenly over the Ditra. The reason for using the flat side of trowel is to fill the square holes or spaces on the Ditra with thin-set and then with the notched trowel, spread the thin-set all over the Ditra surface.

You can use any unmodified thin-set on the Ditra surface. First mix the thin-set according to the specifications and then remix it for couple of times. When thin-set is ready, spread it over the Ditra surface by using the trowel.

After spreading the thin-set, use the flat side of trowel to fill the square gaps over the Ditra surface to the top. Then spread more thin-set over the surface and make even rows with the notched edge of trowel. When tiling the Ditra surface keep in mind to put the adhesive on the back side of tile as well. The reason is that it will keep the strong bond between the tiles and Ditra surface. So apply the thin-set at the back side of the tiles using the flat trowel edge up to 1/8” thick. Then place the tiles one by one onto the rows you made with notched trowel edge.

Complete the whole row and cut the tiles where necessary using the tile cutter. Start tiling the Ditra surface from the center and then move towards the sides. You can also tape the joints of the tiles with the painter’s tape to hold the tiles. Put plastic spacers between the tiles to maintain even gout lines and while doing this make sure that the tile joints are in line with each other.

Since the thin-set used for tiling over the Ditra surface takes almost 24 hours to dry so after tiling ensure that no pressure or weight should be applied on the tiles till the next 24 hours. After 24 hours, remove the painter’s tape as well as plastic spacers and mix the grout according to the instructions if it is not premixed. Apply this grout between the tiles spacing and let it dry, then clean the tiles with some sponge.

## **Tiling on Ditra Matting**

**After matting the surface with Ditra, you need to learn some tips before tiling the surface. In order to install the ceramic or any stone tiles over the Ditra matting, you should use the non-modified thin-set for an effective results. The reason for using the unmodified thin-set is that they maintain the strong bond between the tiles and Ditra matting in the presence of moisture.**

Since Ditra does not keep the adhesive from getting the required moisture, it allows the mortar to hydrate completely thus maintaining the unbroken bond and firm grip between the tiles and the Ditra surface.

However, modified mortar means that it should be completely dry to set the tiles over the Ditra surface and when this adhesive is used between the Ditra and stone tiles, it can take more than two weeks to dry. That is why, I recommend you to use the unmodified mortar when tiling on the Ditra surface. Then simply mix the mortar and spread it over the Ditra matting with the flat trowel’s side to cover the holes on the Ditra mat. Then place the tiles on the adhesive starting from the center. Maintain equal distance between the tiles using plastic spacers and then apply grout between the spacing.

## **Tiling over Ditra Heat**

**Before matting the surface with Ditra seal the edges of the surface and then spread Ditra mat over it. Put the heating cables between the studs and cover them with underlayment. For tiling over the Ditra heat make the thin-set by mixing some extra water more than usual to allow the tiles to stick to surface properly. Also pour some water on the surface and make it a little wet before placing the tiles over it.**

The Ditra heat system is mostly used with the stone tiles because of their heat conductivity. This ensures the transfer of energy from the heating cable to the surface.

Firstly, before tiling any surface you need to seal the edges to provide control against the deflection and excessive movement due to moisture, change in temperature and load distribution. Then install the Ditra heat over the surface on which you are planning to tile with the thin-set. Before installation, it is essential to check the heating cables of the Ditra heat. Then put the Ditra heating cables between the studs and connect the temperature sensor between the studs spacing section. Cover the cables with the underlayment and allow it to cure. Check the heating cable again and at last install the Ditra heat E thermostat and connect it with the cable and power supply.

Now your Ditra heat surface is ready for tiling. So mix the thin-set but this time mix it with extra water because the thin-set on the Ditra heat surface dries out making it very difficult for the tiles to adhere and hold their grip with the surface. Also before spreading the adhesive on the Ditra surface, it is recommended to wet the surface. This will not allow the thin-set to dry off early and you can successfully tile the Ditra heat surface that will be durable and last long.

## **Final Words**

Through this article’s information, you know if you can walk on the Ditra mat before tiling it. Since Ditra is used to provide protection to the tiles against the unnecessary movement, deflection and moisture on the surface so walking over it before tiling or even after installing it for tiling will cause no harm to the mat.

As most of the people know that Ditra is used as an underlayment for tiling on the surfaces like MDF or plywood. So through this article you have also learned about tiling on the Ditra mat and how to mix and spread the thin-set over the Ditra surface for an effective tiling.