

Bullseye Bulletin

Bullseye Home Inspections, LLC
Oklahoma City, OK
(405) 314-3106



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Shower Pan and Tile Red Flags



Shower tile itself is not waterproof. It relies on the waterproof membrane behind the tiles, as well as the shower pan and grout to keep water out of your walls and subfloor and draining properly. During a home inspection, there are critical red flags that can indicate failure in a tiled shower/bath; they include:

Cracked or Missing Grout: Tiny gaps in grout act as direct conduits for water.

Mismatched or Peeling Caulk: Caulking is meant to seal changes in plane (where walls meet the floor, or the curb). If non-color-matched caulk is used or it's pulling away, it can mean someone hastily patched a previous leak.

Loose or Hollow Tiles: Tap on the tiles with a screwdriver handle. If they sound hollow, the adhesive (thin-set) beneath has likely failed due to moisture.

Horizontal Cracks: Vertical cracks are normal settling. Horizontal cracks usually indicate a structural issue or a failing subfloor.

Soft Subfloors: Press firmly on the floor outside the shower and step onto the shower pan. Any spongy, soft, or flexing areas mean the wood subfloor beneath has rotted due to long-term leakage.

Surface Cracks in the Pan: Any visible cracks in fiberglass, acrylic, or stone pans indicate total failure.

Water Stains or Efflorescence: White, chalky residue (efflorescence) on tiles, or water stains and peeling paint on ceilings/walls in the room directly below or adjacent to the shower.

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