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## Objective

We believe that knowing what to expect is the most important part in building a good Customer-contractor relationship. Being an informed Customer is the best way you can help ensure a smooth process and that everyone's expectations have been met. In this "Important Things To Know" document, we will provide the following:

1. Set accurate expectations regarding common and normal "non-issues"
  2. Communicate the highlights of our scope of work and warranty
  3. Explain the process and ensure you are fully prepared to begin your project
  4. Record your specifications to ensure that your final product is exactly what you want
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## The Nature of Natural Stone

1. Granite, marble, quartzite and other natural stones have beautiful natural variations in overall color, size and pattern. These variations are normal and should be expected.



For example, the stones shown above are ALL the same color: Santa Cecilia granite. This stone is 100% natural and may look VERY different from sample to sample and from slab to slab.

For this reason, we recommend that you either physically choose your exact slab or utilize our **digital imaging technology** that allows you to view a high-resolution, digital image of your new countertops before we ever start the fabrication process.

The cost is \$250.00 (per digital view) and you are able to have design input into the layout of your countertops. Taking advantage of this capability results in a true "what you see, is what

you get” experience and you do not have to take any time to go view your slabs at our facility or a distribution warehouse.

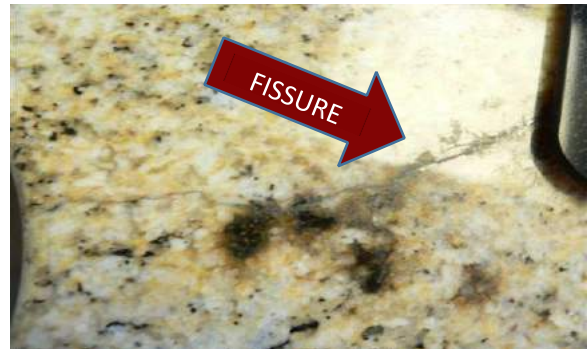
If you do want to select your natural stone material, please contact your Project or Account Manager to set up a viewing at our facility or one of our distribution partners.

2. Pitting, fissures, inclusions, surface chipping and variances in surface polish are all normal:

- a. **Pitting:** Pitting of the countertop surface, particularly in granite, is a commonly seen characteristic of natural stone. Natural stones are made up of several different minerals, each mineral having a different hardness. Pits do not make natural stone less durable or otherwise inferior. They are common, in varying degrees, based on color and species and should be expected when dealing with natural stone. Many people choose natural stone for these exact characteristics.



- b. **Fissures:** The term “fissure” is used in the stone industry to describe a visible separation along inter-crystalline boundaries. This natural separation may start and stop within the face of the stone or extend through an edge. A fissure differs from a crack in that it is a naturally occurring feature of the stone. Once installed, fissures do not pose any structural issues.



- c. **Inclusions:** A spot or mark in the stone that may look a little out of place. This is a natural occurrence in stone and does not make the stone less superior. While we can try to exclude these marks, sometimes keeping the inclusions are required based on the material size and the over project size. See the examples below:



- d. **Surface Chipping:** Different stones have different mineral compositions. Stones that contain softer or flaky minerals, such as mica, will often have spots on the surface or the edge that flake away. There is no process to eliminate this chipping and should be considered when choosing a stone with these characteristics.

TCF offers a **Chip Minimizer** which provides a half bullnose edge profile on an undermount sink cut out, which is a high traffic area in the kitchen. This lower profile edge treatment provides an added layer of impact resistance against chips caused by everyday items such as pots, pans and dishes. The sink must have a minimum of 3/4" radius corners. Zero radius square sinks will still have a 3/4" on the countertop. All sink cuts with a chip minimizer edge profile will have a standard 1/8" overhang (no reveal or flush cut available)

The price is \$250.00 per sink cut out. The chip minimizer option is also available for vanity sinks at a cost of \$125.00 per cut out. Other edge profiles (bevel and round over) might be available depending on sink cut out design.



- e. **Variations in Surface Polish:** Because stone is 100% natural, the face of each stone can certainly vary in terms of sheen, shine and polish. This is totally normal in natural stone and no two pieces of stone are alike, so take the time to pick the right material for your project.
- f. **Other Aesthetics:** Due to natural veining, inherent imperfections, hairline fissures and/or other natural characteristics, it is common for colored resins/epoxies to be used for cosmetic resurfacing, fill and chipping. This can occur both during the slab processing by the factories who quarry the slabs all over the world (not TCF) and during the manufacturing and installation process (by TCF).
- g. **Allowable Repair:** Because we are dealing with products that have variability and fragility, TCF will professionally repair any items (chips, cracks, open fissures, etc.), when the repairs can be accomplished skillfully so that the repair is consistent in color and texture with the unrepaired regions of the countertops. Allowable repair is per the standards set forth by the Natural Stone Institute (Marble Institute of America), which is the governing body of countertop fabricators.
- h. **Pooling in Quartz:** Even though Quartz surfacing is considered a “manufactured” product, it is comprised of 93% natural materials: quartz, sand, feldspar and other aggregates. No manufacturing process, no matter how complex, can produce a completely consistent product time after time. Variations in background color and pattern, as well as aggregate size and distribution not visible from 6 feet away are considered acceptable by the manufacturers. Pigment concentration can occur (pooling) up to the size of a US quarter dollar and is not considered a defect.



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## Common Non-Issues

Here is a list of the most common non-issues:

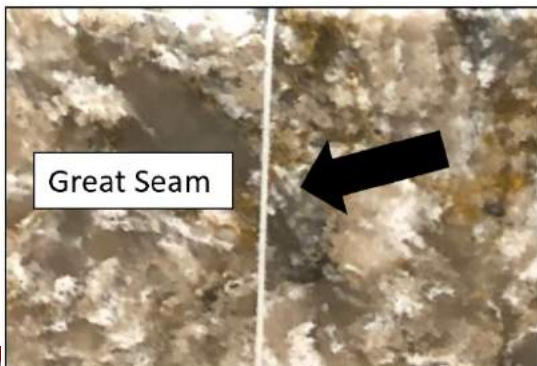
1. **Seams:** TCF delivers some of the best seams in the industry with the use of our technology including digital templating, state-of-the-art machinery, CNC-seam preparation, pneumatic seaming clamps, a well-defined fabrication process and a professionally trained installation team. With that said, you will see and feel your seams. There is no need to worry! Even the

finest and most expensive places in the world have seams in their hard surface countertops. TCF will determine the final placement of seams. Color variation and changes in grain direction between materials on each of the seam is normal and should be expected. Based on the composition of the material, it is possible for the seams to chip during the fabrication (cutting) process, which could cause the seam to feel rough to the touch.

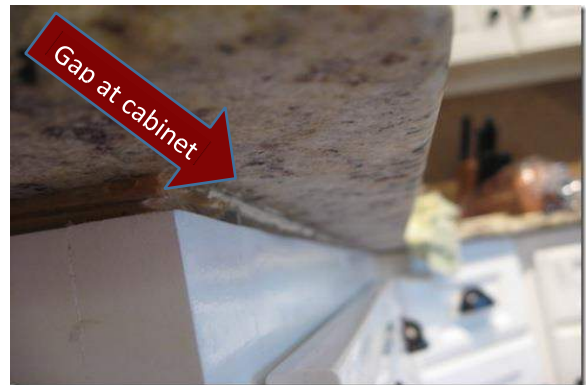
Seam “lippage” is caused when slabs are slightly warped, coming from the quarry or manufacturer. There should be no detectable lippage at the front edge of the countertop. Maximum allowable lippage at the back of the countertop is 1/32”. There should be no detectable lippage on the finished edges of islands and peninsulas. Maximum allowable lippage at the center of an island or peninsula is 1/32” per the Natural Stone Institute (formerly the MIA).



TFC also has the ability to provide an “enhanced seam”, where more machining and technology is utilized to get a best-in-class result. The cost is \$125 per seam.



2. **Gaps:** Gaps are very common and easily covered by paintable caulk, trim or backsplash. Covering gaps is fairly simple but it is not included in TCF's scope of work. Gaps occur for different reasons:
- Sometimes we will leave gaps on purpose to be able to successfully install the countertop. This is most evident when the countertop is surrounded by three walls or if the walls are out of square (both are very common occurrences).
  - Gaps often occur behind the backsplash because walls are often bowed and natural stone will not bend to conform to the wall. We will offer to fill the gaps with paintable caulk and then you can touch up the paint after the installation.
  - It is very common for cabinets not to be level (both new and existing). In some cases, we have to recommend that you hire a carpenter to re-level the cabinets because the tolerance is too large and might affect the long term structural integrity of the countertops. If practical, we will use shims to level the countertops, which you might see (along with silicone or gaps between the countertop and the top of the cabinet) depending on how much we have to level the countertop. We recommend that you install trim after the countertop is installed, if seeing any of these items are bothersome to you. According to the MIA, cabinets must be within 1/8" of flat and level over 10'.
  - If you choose to reuse your existing tile backsplash, there may be gaps between the bottom of the last row of tile and the top of the countertop. Upon request, we can use a paintable caulk to fill in the gap.



3. ***Incidental/Consequential Damage:*** During our work, we are as careful as possible, but walls, backsplash, wallpaper, floors, plumbing and paint may sometimes be damaged. This is common in construction – not everything comes out or goes back perfectly. In bathrooms, remove mirrors if you do not want to risk having them break. As a condition of TCF performing the requested work, please acknowledge you understand that TCF is **NOT** responsible for the following:
  - a. Dings or scratches to walls, wall paper, cabinets, appliances, flooring
  - b. Trim, paint or wall paper lines that are not 100% covered by the new countertops
  - c. Damage to existing plumbing, sinks, faucets, fixtures and disposals due to age, corrosion and/or tear out
  - d. The saving of tile splashes or sinks for reuse. They are often damaged during the tear out process
  - e. Mirrors broken/damaged during the tear out or installation process
  - f. The working condition of appliances which were removed for installation of countertops or damaged during removal or repositioning of appliances during tear out or countertop installation
  - g. Damage, intentional or unintentional, to walls (drywall, plaster walls, etc.) during the tear out or installation processes
  - h. Tire tracks on driveways/lawns. Dust on driveways.
4. ***Dust:*** If the project has an overmount (drop in) sink, cook top or faucet holes, there are times where the finished cut of the opening will be completed while the countertop is installed. This creates dust even though our installation team will use a dust collection system (i.e. vacuum). Natural stone/quartz dust is very fine and takes several days to settle, so even though we clean thoroughly before we leave the installation, there will still be some clean up to do. Seal off adjacent rooms, cover stainless and glass appliances, turn off HVAC systems or cover intake vents and return air vents. Wiping dust off stainless, wood or glass may scratch the surface, and TCF is not responsible for any damage.
5. ***Lighting:*** The lighting where you show samples or tagged your slabs, the lighting in our factory and the lighting where your new countertops are being installed are all different. When we quality control the countertops in our fabrication department and then install the countertops, the variance in lighting may cause different aesthetics to appear. For example, in our facility we might not see any dull spots in the finished countertops but these dull spots (which are normal and caused by the different types of materials that are within the countertop) might be visible once the countertops are installed based on directional light (through a window, pendant lighting, etc.) hitting the countertop surface.

6. **Communication:** It is absolutely vital to the success of your project that we have all specifications in writing to make sure that we are all on the same page. The authorized decision maker (must be at least 18 years old) on the job site will be asked to verify and sign off on the information and we will follow those final instructions. We also recommend that detailed conversations between all decision makers happened before the field measure because all decisions are 100% final at the field measure. Any changes made to an order, post-field measure will incur a charge of \$199.00 and may cause delays in the project.

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## Scope of Work (SOW)

TCF is considered a countertop fabricator and installer, which means that we measure, procure material, fabricate and install the material that you choose. We are not a general contractor or remodeling company.

1. Only items or services that are explicitly listed in your estimate are included in your scope of work (SOW) or also referred to as your Countertop Proposal.
2. Someone more talented than us 😊 created natural stone, and as such, the warranty covers workmanship only, not the natural stone itself. If you receive a 15 year sealer with your natural stone, your countertops are protected from any permanent staining during that 15 year period (per the third-party, 15 year sealer manufacturer's guidelines). Natural quartz, solid surface, ultra compact surfaces and porcelain countertops do have warranties associated with their product. Your TCF Account and/or Project Manager can give you the details on the warranty of your purchased product.
3. If an undermount sink is purchased from TCF, the cut out charge also includes the mounting of the sink, but does NOT include any plumbing reconnections such as sinks, drains, faucets, disposals or dishwashers. TCF does employ licensed plumbers on staff and these services can be purchased, just ask your TCF Account and/or Project Manager. TCF will attach the dishwasher to the cabinets or to the underside of the countertop. TCF does not warranty any plumbing fixtures that are reused.
4. Unless specifically stated, TCF's proposals do not include a disconnection of plumbing or cleaning/clearing off the countertops or inside of base cabinets. Please make sure those items are taken care of prior to our crew's arrival. You can purchase plumbing disconnection services through TCF, just ask your TCF Account and/or Project Manager.
5. If tear out and haul away of existing countertops are purchased, it will appear as a separate line item on the proposal. This includes removal & haul away of all existing tops and sinks. TCF does not tear out existing tile backsplashes.
6. TCF cannot dispose of any appliances.



7. Our proposals reflect a price that takes into account the best material yield for the new countertops. If a special request is made in terms of material layout that affects yield, a revised proposal reflecting the increased cost will be provided and must be approved prior to the beginning of fabrication.
  8. Our standard natural stone sealer is included with all natural stone purchases. It is solventbased and must be resealed every 6-12 months based on color of material (porosity), type of cleaning supplies used, how often countertops are used/cleaned, etc.
    - a. TCF offers a buff, clean and reseat program for \$400 (up to 45 square feet)— just contact us when you are ready for the service
  9. If you have not already purchased material with an extended sealer, TCF recommends upgrading to a 15-year sealer (excludes marbles), which applies a chemical bond to your natural stone countertops. The cost is \$10.00 per SF and your TCF Account and/or Project Manager can give you a formal price. In addition, this sealer comes with a 15 year warranty so that should your countertops ever stain and if that stain cannot be removed by TCF, your countertops will get replaced at no additional charge.
  10. Other than fabricating your countertops, TCF is not responsible for modifying the material in any way. Natural stone will include natural characteristics such as pitting, fissures, resin fill, inclusions, etc. (see section on “The Nature of Natural Stone”).
  11. TCF does not include some of the common work that is sometimes needed in conjunction with the installation of countertops; plumbing, electrical, painting, dry wall repair and carpentry. TCF does employ full time licensed plumbers and tile installers, should you want to hire TCF for those additional services.
  12. TCF will provide measure and install dates based on when we receive all of your final information (first in, first out). We cannot guarantee exact arrival times due to the many circumstances that might affect timing (weather, previous project install delays, traffic, etc). Our Logistics Department will communicate with you to provide an arrival window (usually 2 hour timeframe) and updates regarding any schedule changes. We always want to make sure every Customer is 100% satisfied and sometimes that means spending a little more time on a job to make everything right. This can cause delays in our schedule but we know that our Customers appreciate our attention to the smallest details and that sometimes schedules will not go as planned.
  13. All decisions are final at field measure. A \$199 change order fee applies (in addition to any costs associated with change orders) to changes requested after the measure is complete.
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## Material Selections

All material selections must be completed and finalized prior to the field measure appointment.

To ensure that we are able to accurately capture seam locations, overall sizes of countertops and final design, please make sure that all decision makers are in agreement with the countertop selections before the field measure appointment.

### **ALL DECISIONS ARE FINAL AT FIELD MEASURE.**

Any changes, post field measure, will require a \$199.00 change order fee and will stop production of the project until all changes have been approved and additional monies have been collected.

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## The Process

All material selections must be finalized prior to the field measure appointment.

### **Field Measure:**

1. TCF requires the decision maker (18 years or older) for the project to be present at the time of the field measure to review all of the job specifications. There are many decisions that need to be reviewed on the job site that might not have been discussed with your Account or Project Manager due to job site conditions. If the decision maker is not on site, a \$199.00 cancellation/reschedule fee will be charged to the project.
2. There are NO CHANGES AFTER THE FIELD MEASURE. Any changes post-field measure will incur a \$199.00 change fee and a possible delay in the project timeline.
3. Cabinets must be fully installed, level (left to right), plumb (front to back) and secured (the cabinets must not have any movement or sway as we will be taking extremely precise laser measurements and any changes in cabinet location after the field measure could result in an inaccurate fit). All end panels, trim and any other final cabinet pieces must be installed prior to the field measure. Any cabinets that sit directly on top of the countertops (i.e. appliance garage), must be installed after the countertops are installed. Level is defined as to within 1/8" over a 10 foot span.
4. If an overscribe (the existing countertops are still installed), the countertops must be 100% cleared and accessible BEFORE the field measurer arrives. This means nothing sitting on the countertops. There are inherent risks with field measuring with existing countertops. The field measurer cannot always accurately access the back wall or the levelness of the cabinets. When an overscribe is required, our overhang tolerance (from the front face of the cabinets), increases from 1/8" to 1/4". At the time of the install, if the cabinets are determined not to be level, the

Customer will need to hire an outside party to level the cabinets and a \$199.00 return trip fee will be charged, since the installation cannot be completed.



5. The sink base cabinet also must be cleared out prior to the field measure appointment.
6. All sinks, faucets, other plumbing fixtures (reverse osmosis, soap dispensers, etc.) and appliances must be on site prior to the field measure appointment.
7. Farm/apron sinks must be completely/permanently installed (no plumbing connections) prior to field measure.
8. If you are providing your own countertop supports, these supports must be installed prior to the field measure appointment.
9. The “countdown” on your project starts the day after the field measure (the field measure is day zero). However, if you are missing information, the clock does not start until TCF has every single piece of data required to fabricate your countertops.
10. Your countertop is manufactured based on the in-home field measure. Changes after the inhome template may require another in-home template appointment and additional charges may apply. Changes after the template is complete may not be permitted if your countertop has already been released to production.

#### **Programming, Material Layout and Proposal Revisions:**

1. After field measure, your job goes directly to our CAD drafting department and then to Project Management to complete the Verify process to:
  - a. Ensure the square footage on the proposal matches the actual square footage from the field measure
  - b. Review proposal specifications and field measurement notes for any changes
  - c. Create a Variance which shows all of the changes to the countertops versus the original proposal along with any additional monies that might be owed based on those changes

2. You will then be asked to approve the following:
  - a. CAD drawing: Please make sure you check the overall job to your specifications. You will want to review overhangs, sink & faucet locations, seam placement (see point b) and any design features. TCF is responsible for final measurements but you are responsible for overall design. This must be reviewed within 24 hours of receipt in order to keep your project on track.
  - b. Seam placement is based on several factors: material color, stability, size of material, structural integrity (based on cabinet layout/supports), and ability to maneuver the countertops into the final resting spot. Removal or elimination of seams may be possible but additional costs could occur if unnecessary waste is created or if additional personnel are required to maneuver the countertops in the factory and/or the job site.
  - c. Revised Estimate (if applicable): There is a chance that your square footage changed from the original proposal or that you added/subtracted items at the time of the field measure. This must be approved within 24 hours of receipt in order to keep your project on track.
  - d. Digital Layout (if purchased): This is your opportunity to review the digital rendering of your countertops and approve what they will exactly look like once installed. This must be approved within 24 hours of receipt in order to keep your project on track.

### **Preparing for Installation:**

1. Once you have approved the above documents (CAD, Variance/Revised Proposal, Digital Layout if purchased), you will be provided with an install date within a few days. Typical installation time is 7-10 business days after final Customer approval. In preparation for the install, you will need to complete several activities to ensure a smooth and efficient installation.
2. Clear off your countertops (if existing). Remove cabinet drawers to prevent dust and debris from getting onto your personal items. Clear out the sink cabinet so that it is empty. Take out any extra furniture or fragile/expensive items away from the work zone (construction area).
3. Make sure that all pets and small children are not in the work area. Your new countertops are beautiful and extremely heavy. Safety for everyone (and everything) is our number one priority. We also use certain chemicals during the installation process. If you are allergic or the smells gets too intense, please let our installation team know and we can open up windows or doors to alleviate the temporary odors.
4. Disconnect any plumbing, gas or electrical hook ups in advance of the installation (not during the installation). Unless you have paid TCF to provide disconnection services, TCF's installation crew will not perform these duties and cannot be responsible and cannot be held liable for the functionality of existing plumbing lines, fixtures, valves or equipment. TCF does employ licensed

plumbers who can perform these services for you, should you need the assistance. Please ask for pricing from your TCF Account and/or Project Manager before the installation date so that everything can be coordinated for you.

5. Be prepared to do some touch up work, including but not limited to, grouting, painting, trim work, drywall repair and minor cleaning. (see section "Common Non-Issues).
6. Please plan a clear and direct path for our installation team to carry in your new countertops. Remove all obstacles that might impede or create a safety hazard for our installers on floors and walls. Keep in mind, tight corners can be difficult to navigate.
7. You, or a decision maker (at least 18 years of age), must be present for the entire installation. Our installation crew will ask you to walk the job site with them after the installation is complete. Please make sure that you inspect your countertops thoroughly and let the installation crew know if you have any concerns before they leave your home. We want to make sure that you are 100% happy BEFORE we leave.
8. It is important to note that overhangs might not always be consistent on countertops because the walls and cabinets may not be square and straight. The countertops are cut the best possible way for the best looking end product. A 1/8" to 1/4" tolerance is the industry standard so please understand that your overhangs may not be consistent from one end of the countertop to the other end.
9. If your cabinets are not level, TCF installers choose to use unfinished wood (or plastic) shims to level the countertops up to 1/4". Any leveling over 1/4" will need to be addressed by leveling the cabinets. This work is not in the TCF's Scope of Work and cannot be completed by TCF. This service requires either a carpenter, handy man or cabinet installer, which needs to be hired by you. Unleveled cabinets are sometimes hard to identify until install in an overscribe situation.
10. The installation process takes an average of 1-3 days to complete, including plumbing. The typical countertop installation requires 2-6 hours depending on complexity and size.

#### **After the Installation:**

1. Do NOT run your dishwasher or attempt to use your sink until you have had a plumber reconnect your plumbing. If you run these items, you will get water leakage and flooding since nothing is connected; TCF will not be held liable for any water damage or flooding.
2. It is recommended to wait at least 24 hours after the countertop install before having your plumbing reconnected. We use silicone to make a water tight barrier between the sink and the countertop and silicone takes 24 hours to dry. Making the reconnections too early may result in a compromised water-tight barrier, which would void the workmanship warranty.
3. If you have other contractors doing work in the area, please instruct them NOT to stand or lay anything on your new countertops. Once we have left the job site, the countertops are yours.

4. The area surrounding any cut outs in your countertop will inherently be weaker. Ensure that no one sits or stands, or the like on these areas. Also instruct the plumber against over-tightening the plumbing fixtures. Cracked cut outs that occur after our installation crews leave are not covered in the Workmanship Warranty,
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## Thank You!

At The Countertop Factory Midwest, we treasure our Customers and we sincerely thank you for your business. We have a motto, "The Customer is Boss" and it means that everything we do is in the best interests of you, our Customer. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please notify your TCF contact so that we can address them for you. Our goal is to exceed your expectations and we understand that the best marketing for our company is by creating raving TCF fans! Thank you for being part of the TCF family!

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## Financial Information

Your proposal indicates the payment terms for your project. For jobs that are 100% payment in advance, payment must be made to TCF prior to scheduling the field measure appointment.

For jobs that are 50%/50%, the first payment will allow our team to schedule your field measure. The second payment, once received, will allow our team to schedule your installation.

For jobs that require final payment at installation, a check or cashier's check must be presented to the installation team prior to the install of the countertops. If paying by credit card, a 3% convenience fee will be applied to the overall invoice and that payment must be made before the installation team arrives at the job site.

Any cancellation/missed appointment without at least 24 hour notice will be assessed a \$199.00 fee. If a job is cancelled after the measure has been completed, a \$400.00 measure fee will be assessed.

If a job is cancelled after the production has begun, the Customer is responsible for the full amount of the purchase price, minus \$5.00 per square foot for the installation costs that were not incurred. Your countertops are special orders that are custom made (uniquely altered, color matched, shaped, sized or otherwise uniquely designed or fitted to accommodate the requirements of a particular space or environment). Please allow three weeks for TCF to process any refund requests.

Any balances past the payment terms will be assessed a monthly late penalty fee of 1.5% of the total invoice (not to exceed 18% per year). If payment has not been made by the 60<sup>th</sup> day after the installation was complete, TCF will automatically file a lien on the property in order to protect our rights to get paid.

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **Q: What is a Natural Stone Surface countertop?**

There are many different types such as Granite, Marble, Soapstone, Quartzite and Limestone. These are natural materials, with natural characteristics and are mined in quarries all over the world.

### **Q: What is a Quartz (or Natural Quartz) countertop?**

This material has the look and feel of natural stone, but is actually stronger due to its engineered make-up. This material is typically made of 93% natural quartz, manufactured with resin, colorants and other materials. The end result is a material that does not stain, does not require sealing and will not breed bacteria. This material also typically comes with a minimum ten (10) year warranty from the manufacturer.

### **Q: What is a Hard Surface countertop?**

Any material that is fabricated typically using sophisticated machinery. Examples are granite, natural stones, quartz, porcelain, sintered and recycled surfaces.

### **Q: What is a Solid Surface countertop?**

This is a man-made material that does not stain, does not require sealing and will not breed bacteria. This material has the ability to be adhered together, allowing a “seamless” appearance, although the seams are meant to be inconspicuous, but not invisible. This material also typically comes with a minimum ten (10) year warranty from the manufacturer.

### **Q: What is a Plastic Laminate countertop?**

This is a man-made material that is adhered to a wood-type frame. This material has many colors and textures but can scratch and chip more easily than hard or solid surfaces.

### **Q: What is a Recycled/“Green” countertop?**

These types of products are made with recycled materials such as glass, concrete, paper or metals. These countertops do require maintenance but each surface has different requirements.

### **Q: What is a Wood countertop?**

Natural wood comes in many different species, colors, textures and variations. Just like natural stone, each piece of wood is unique. This material can scratch and chip more easily than hard or solid surfaces.

### **Q: What is a Pre-Fab Granite countertop?**

For an economical option, granite already cut into blanks (26”x96”) can be fabricated to fit your required dimensions. This prefabricated material is already edged with an eased edge and this material is not guaranteed to match if using multiple blanks. Seams, which normally run back to front, will be diagonal and located in corners.

### **Q: How should I clean my countertops?**

For most materials, every day cleaning can be accomplished with mild dish soap and water. There are also cleaners available at your local home improvement stores. To avoid water streaks, wipe counters dry after cleaning. Windex® (without ammonia) or similar products can be used to clean up excess oil but are not

recommended for daily use due to the acidic levels in the product. For best results, consult the manufacturer's website for clean and care suggestions.

**Q: Can I stain my countertops?**

Almost anything can be stained, but sealed natural stone will resist most common stains. Solid Surface, Quartz, Porcelain and Sintered surfaces are incredibly difficult to be stained due to their chemical makeup. Plastic laminate will resist many stains, but cannot be sealed to be "stain-proof". Recycled products and Wood can be more susceptible to stains so please consult your Account Manager for exact directions.

**Q: How often do I need to seal my countertops?**

The Natural Stone Institute recommends sealing natural stone once every 6 to 12 months. Using highly acidic/harsh chemicals or direct heat may deteriorate the original sealer, therefore requiring sealing more often. If water is no longer beading up on the top, it's time to reseal. Over sealing can lead to a hazy look. Natural quartz, solid surface and plastic laminate do not require sealing. Many recycled materials require sealing every three to six months using a wax sealer.

**Q: I left a cold drink on my hard surface and now there is a dark ring. What do I do?**

Nothing. Just as the cold liquid inside the glass pulled water from the air to create sweat on the outside of the glass, the cold has condensed water (under the sealer) within the stone. Simply remove the glass; wipe up excess water, the condensed water within the stone will dissipate, typically within 24 hours.

**Q: Why are Customers encouraged to view their natural stone slabs prior to fabrication?**

Stone is a natural material and color variations, veining, pitting, inclusions, fissures, fill and other naturally-occurring characteristics are very common and perfectly normal. There may be vast differences between samples viewed and a Customer's actual material. Because this material is a natural product, consistency cannot be guaranteed, even within a single slab. Some materials are very consistent while other colors may change in color/shading/veining from slab to slab or within the slab (from top to bottom or left to right).

**Q: What am I looking for when I view my natural stone material?**

You should be looking at the overall coloring of the natural stone, to be sure that this is what you envisioned for your project. Since tiles, paint, flooring and wallpaper come in various shades it is much easier to match these items after you have selected your natural stone slab. Also, some natural stones have pitting or surface blemishes that causes the stone to feel rough or textured in spots.

**Q: Do I have to view my new countertop material before it is fabricated?**

No, as some materials are very consistent. However, other materials may change in color, shading or veining throughout the entire slab. Since quartz, solid surface and plastic laminate are manufactured, most (but not all) patterns are consistent with the sample that you viewed. Please note that the choice to view your material is up to you, however if you choose not to view your material (natural material) prior to fabrication, you will be required to sign a waiver.

All natural stones are products of nature and no two pieces are exactly alike. Color, veining and texture may differ with each piece. ABSOLUTELY NO CLAIMS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER FABRICATION FOR REASONS OF COLOR, TEXTURE, CONSISTANCY OR VEINING.

**Q: What do seams look like?**



For hard surfaces, the standard seam allowance between two pieces of granite can range from 1/16" to 1/8" wide. A color matched stone adhesive is used to join the two pieces of countertop. Once cured (approximately 4-6 hours), this adhesive is food safe. Seams are necessary and are not invisible. We will do our best to provide a clean seam and color-match the basic color tone of the hard surface.

For solid surface, the material is adhered together and an inconspicuous seam is made. Please note that these seams are not necessarily invisible.

For plastic laminate, the material is glued together and seams are minimized, but visible.

**Q: Can I have countertops installed over existing cabinets?**

New countertops can be installed over existing cabinetry; however we will not be able to install new countertops if the cabinets are not structurally sound or are not level. If the cabinets are not level or structurally sound upon arrival of our installers, your installation will be rescheduled once these issues have been rectified. Cabinets need to be leveled within ¼" over a 10 foot length. A fee of \$199.00 will be charged for a job site that is not ready to accept the new countertops.

**Q: I have tile above my current backsplash. Will the new splashes meet these tile lines?**

Your new countertops will be installed within level tolerances but your tile may not be installed completely level. We recommend removing existing tile prior to installation of your new countertops and replacing the tile after new tops are installed.

If the tile is not perfectly straight, the installation crew will field measure for the splashes after the countertops are installed. 3-5 days later, the custom height splashes will be installed. An additional fee may be incurred for the second required trip.

In addition, your old countertops may have been 1 ½" thick while your new countertops maybe 1 ¼" or some other thickness. This could cause a gap between the top of the new countertop and the tile backsplash.

**Q: What is the longest countertop piece I can have without a seam?**

For hard natural surfaces, seam quantity and location will be determined after the field measure by the engineering department. Generally, natural slab lengths vary from 100" to 125" while the height ranges from 65" to 75"; the average slab length is 68"x115".

Natural quartz slab sizes have sizes ranging from 55" x 120" to 65"x133" depending on the manufacturer (and design pattern). Also keep in mind the weight of hard surfaces, which can weigh up to 20 pounds per square foot. For example, an island measuring 48" x 96" could weigh up to 600 pounds and would require 3-4 men to carry. In addition, the entry into the home must accommodate this size countertop, which may even prohibit larger sizes depending on hallways, elevators or staircases. Long splashes may need to be cut into more than one piece to prevent breakage during transit and installation. Seams are at the discretion of the field measurer and fabrication departments. The typical maximum length of a splash is 60".

With that said, the largest countertop that we will carry with one crew is 96"x26". Anything larger requires extra handling within our factory and during installation. There is a fee for these larger countertop pieces.

**Q: Why is 1 ¼" (3cm) material for hard surfaces recommended for kitchens?**

In most kitchens you will have long lengths of countertop which could contain a large cut out (sink or cooktop). To minimize the risk of breakage during fabrication and installation, the 1 ¼" (3cm) material is recommended. ¾" (2cm) material is more common with smaller countertops or vertical cladding.

**Q: What is the maximum overhang allowed?**

For hard surfaces, any overhang up to 12" will rely upon the 2/3 rule: 2/3 of the material needs to be supported for the 1/3 overhang. As an example, a 24" cabinet can safely have up to a 12" overhang without support. Quartz can have an unsupported overhang up to 14" (using the 2/3 rule).

For solid surfaces and plastic laminate, any overhang larger than 6" will need to be supported. A solid wood subtop will be installed under the countertop by The Countertop Factory for an extra fee.

Generally any overhang over 12" should be supported. Supports can range from wood corbels to metal brackets (flat stock or angled). Customers will be advised if supports are needed at time of measure, which can change after engineering reviews the final dimensions and overall material sizes. Supports purchased by TCF will also include installation. Supports that are provided by the Customer must be installed by the Customer prior to countertop installation.

**Q: Why would I want the underside of the hard surface polished on an overhang?**

In the situation of a breakfast bar facing a family room, where the underside of the countertop might be visible when seated, the undersides of the over-hang can be polished. This can be done for an additional charge. Please speak with your Account Manager for pricing.

**Q: Can I place hot items directly on my countertops?**

Some granites can tolerate temperatures in excess of 1200 degrees (F.) and you might be able to put direct heat on the countertop. TCF recommends never putting items from your oven, stove top or grill directly on the granite surface without a trivet or hot pad. Once items have cooled, placing them directly on the stone countertop would be acceptable.

For quartz, it is recommended to use a trivet and direct heat is not advisable due to the chemical makeup of this material.

For solid surfaces, plastic laminate and wood, No. These materials are much softer and direct heat is not advisable.

**Q: Can I use my countertop as a cutting board?**

While you can find websites that indicate it is ok to use certain countertop materials as a cutting board (darker granites, quartz), we always recommend not to do it. If you want to purchase a matching cutting board for your kitchen, please ask us and we can get you pricing.

## Countertop Disclaimer and Agreement Understanding

By signing this document I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand and acknowledge this entire TCF Agreement and all of the important information provided within this document.

I understand that granite, marble and other varieties of stone are 100% natural materials and there will be variations including, but not limited to: polish, color, structure, movement or consistency. Wood countertops have the same natural characteristics of stone.

All natural stone are products of nature and no two pieces are exactly alike. Color, veining and texture may differ with each piece. **ABSOLUTELY NO CLAIMS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER FABRICATION FOR REASONS OF COLOR, TEXTURE, CONSISTANCY OR VEINING.**

The Countertop Factory Midwest does not guarantee an exact color match to any sample or display. Inherent within these materials are natural characteristics, including but not limited to: fissures, pitting, inclusions, fill, tinted epoxy and resins and they are not considered flaws in the stone. Material thickness is nominal and can vary up to 1/8" (plus or minus).

Natural stone and quartz will likely have seams that will be visible and felt.

Marbles and other soft natural materials are not recommended by TCF for kitchen countertop applications. These materials will etch (the polish will become dull), patina (become worn looking), chip, scratch more easily and have a tendency to stain.

TCF recommends that unsupported spans are kept to a minimum as per accepted industry standards. Unsupported spans risk cracking, breaking or tipping. There are different support requirements based on the type of material, thickness of material and overall overhangs desired.

I acknowledge that TCF’s Field Measuring experts might have provided me with suggestions/recommendations and that any suggestions/recommendations that I choose not to follow, I do so at my own risk.

I understand that all decisions are 100% FINAL at the field measure appointment and that TCF will fabricate countertops according to the specifications that are approved in writing at the time of the field measure appointment.

I have read the above disclaimer. I have discussed all terms and conditions with any and all other decision makers and hereby acknowledge that it is my responsibility to understand the content in this contract and the workmanship warranty.

\_\_\_\_\_

Customer’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Customer’s Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

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## Slab Selection

Please mark your choice below by initialing next to your selections:

\_\_\_\_\_

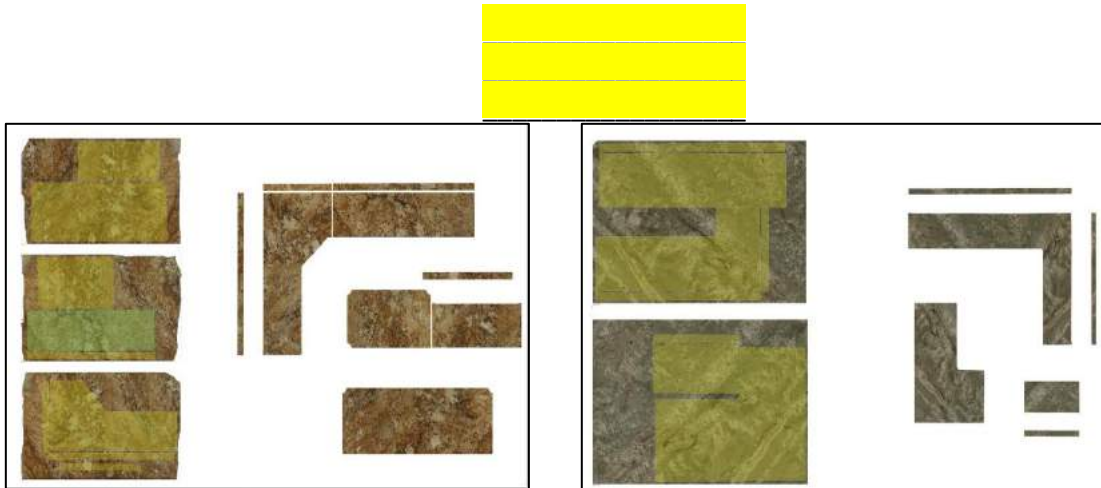
Yes, I would like to view and approve my natural stone slabs at TCF or TCF’s distributor selected in the TCF proposal. I will work with my Account/Project Manager to set up an appointment for slab viewing.

\_\_\_\_\_

No, I do not want to view and approve my natural stone slabs at TCF or TCF’s distributor determined in the TCF proposal. By choosing this option, I understand that I waive all rights to rejecting the material based upon the above conditions listed under the material disclaimer.

\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to purchase the digital imaging upgrade for the following locations at the cost of \$250.00 for kitchens and \$125.00 for all other locations:



Identify locations:

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## Learning The Facts About Lead-Based Paint (revised 2017)



About half (50%) of homes built before 1978 are assumed to have lead-based paint, based on EPA studies. Lead gets into the body when it is swallowed or breathed-in and once in the body, lead can have significant negative effects on human health.

Effective April 22, 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) instituted the Renovation, Repair and Painting Program (RRP) to ensure that safe practices are performed when lead-based paints are evident within a home. This program refers to interior renovations that affect more than six square feet of paint or exterior renovations that affect more than twenty square feet of paint for homes built before 1978.

In order to ensure that we are not required to perform any special work practices while installing countertops or tile in your home, please review and initial the following conditions:

1. My house was built before January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1978 (circle one): **Yes or No**

If Homeowner answers “No” to item #1 (above), no special work practices are required. If the house was built prior to 1979 (homeowner answered “Yes” to item #1), the Homeowner must review and answer the following statements below:

2. A child under age 6 resides in this house **Yes or No**
3. A woman who is pregnant resides in this house **Yes or No**
4. The house is a child-occupied facility **Yes or No**

If any of the questions (#2, #3, #4) are answered with a “Yes”, TCF will be required to schedule an onsite test of the existing paint and share the results with the Homeowner. For any positive test of lead paint, a TCF manager will contact the Homeowner within 48 hours of test results for a recommended course of action.

The following link, <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/renovaterightbrochure.pdf>, offers great insight and knowledge about lead paint and renovations in homes built before 1978. Please review this digital pamphlet so you understand how to Renovate Right!

The Countertop Factory Midwest has provided me with this mandatory questionnaire, as well as access to the Renovate Right pamphlet, as it relates to lead-based paints and the renovation work to be completed at my house.

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Customer's Signature

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Date