

The True Cost of an Expired Reagent

Why the sticker price is only the beginning

Article 4 of 22

6 min-minute read

3-5x

True total cost vs
purchase price alone

\$25-75

Rush replacement
shipping per incident

Hours

Of admin time per
compliance citation

When a reagent expires on the shelf, the instinct is to write off its purchase price and move on. But the sticker price is only the beginning. The true cost of expired inventory is a cascade of hidden expenses that, when added together, can be three to five times the original purchase price.

1 Direct Cost: The Purchase Price

This is the obvious one—the dollars you paid for the reagent that will never produce a billable result. But it is the smallest portion of the total cost.

2 Disposal Cost

Expired reagents are often classified as chemical waste and must be disposed of according to regulations. Depending on classification, disposal through a licensed waste hauler can cost anywhere from a few dollars to over a hundred dollars per container. Factor in staff time to properly label, segregate, and document.

QUICK TIP: Track disposal costs separately to see the true impact.

3 Replacement Rush Cost

When a reagent expires and you still need to run that test, you place an unplanned order. Rush fees typically range from \$25 to \$75 per shipment and can be much higher for temperature-sensitive items requiring cold chain logistics.

4 Downtime and Delayed Results

If you cannot run a test because the reagent expired and the replacement has not arrived, you either delay patient results or send the sample to a reference lab. Reference lab send-outs cost more per test and the turnaround time is longer, which affects physician satisfaction and your volume over time.

5 Compliance and Opportunity Cost

Using an expired reagent accidentally is a CLIA violation that can result in citations and corrective action plans. The administrative burden costs hours of management time. Additionally, money tied up in shelf inventory is money not deployed elsewhere.

QUICK TIP: Next time a reagent expires, add up ALL costs. The total makes a compelling case for tighter inventory.

HIDDEN COSTS OF ONE EXPIRED REAGENT KIT (\$500 VALUE)



Illustrative cost breakdown for a typical \$500 reagent kit

BOTTOM LINE: Next time a reagent expires, do not just write off the purchase price. Add up disposal, rush replacement, downtime, compliance risk, and carrying cost. That total is the real number.

FREE TOOLS TO GET STARTED

Template	What It Does
Expired Reagent Cost Calculator	Calculate the true total cost including all hidden expenses

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