



2025 NTE Insights Report

Optimize Not-to-Exceed Limits With a Strategic, Data-Driven Approach

2025 NTE Insights Report

Smart strategies to stay on budget and ahead of the curve.



Lightening workload, maintaining oversight, and improving relationships with service providers and location managers in the field. That's the real-world potential of not-to-exceed (NTE) limits.

But setting NTE limits can feel like a guessing game, even for experienced professionals. With actionable insights at your fingertips, you can make more informed decisions and set NTE limits that are in line with industry benchmarks and your company's historical trends.

Using data from millions of work orders completed through the ServiceChannel platform in 2024, this analysis focuses on key industries — Dental, Quick-Service Restaurants (QSR), and Retail Apparel — offering insights into common maintenance issues, average service spend, and invoice-to-NTE ratios.

Key Takeaways

Data-Driven Insights

This report analyzes millions of work orders from 2024, providing actionable intelligence for facilities managers.

Industry-Specific Focus

See detailed breakdowns for Dental, Quick-Service Restaurants (QSR), and Retail Apparel industries.

NTE Optimization

Learn how to set strategic NTE limits to streamline operations and control costs.

Best Practices

Discover expert recommendations for implementing effective NTE strategies across various trades and service levels.

Performance Metrics

Understand the relationship between NTE limits, invoice amounts, and service level agreements (SLAs).

Best Practices for Setting NTEs



Analyze Repair Data

Use ServiceChannel analytics to determine average costs for specific repair types across different assets, problem codes, and location types.



Don't Go Too Low

Excessively low limits may lead to frequent work stoppages for quote approvals, potentially resulting in additional trip charges and delays.



Automate Preventive Maintenance

To dispatch work orders efficiently and reduce the need for oversight, apply predetermined NTEs to planned maintenance tasks.



Monitor and Adjust

Regularly review NTE performance and adjust limits if the number of proposals exceeding the NTE begins to increase.

The Power of Strategic NTE Limits

With preset NTEs, facilities managers can maintain cost control while empowering service providers to resolve issues with minimal oversight.



The Perfect Balance

Finding the sweet spot for your NTEs can require some artistry. Set them too low and you'll face costly delays — too high and you limit visibility into work orders that could otherwise benefit from a more thorough review.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

With a data-driven approach, you can be confident your NTEs are set appropriately. ServiceChannel's platform leverages data from millions of work orders to help you set precise limits that work.

Strategic Asset Management

Through continuous monitoring of provider performance and repair outcomes, you can fine-tune your NTE strategies to achieve optimal results in both cost control and operational efficiency.

Continuous Optimization

This data-driven approach also provides crucial insights into asset lifecycle costs, helping you make smarter repair-versus-replace decisions for both individual equipment and entire fleets.

Let Automation Do the Heavy Lifting

Beyond a cost control measure, NTE limits can be a powerful tool for operational efficiency in facilities management.

Gain Detailed Oversight

ServiceChannel Work Order Manager empowers facilities teams to set metrics-based NTEs. This granular approach delivers superior cost control compared to using flat NTEs across all scenarios.

Know Your Issues

Outlining possible contingencies and repairs for a location, your “Issues List” in the Work Order Manager serves as the starting point for setting NTEs and SLAs.

Set NTEs Based on Historical Data

By analyzing historical repair data, you can establish appropriate NTE thresholds that balance cost control with operational efficiency.

Stay Prepared with Accurate NTEs

When you have a comprehensive “Issues List” populated with accurate NTEs, you enable the field team and service providers to respond to issues quickly and with confidence.

Make Service Requests Seamless

When a repair is needed, an authorized user can log into ServiceChannel and easily search the Issues List by keyword, or they can select pre-filled issues from a drop-down list to submit a repair request.



15-20%

Setting NTE limits 15-20% above average invoice amounts encourages a healthy proposal rate while maintaining cost control.

\$1.7 million

A ServiceChannel client saved \$1.7M in one year by optimizing NTEs, reducing average invoice costs by 12%.*

[*2023 ServiceChannel Analytics](#)

Dental: 2024 Service Spend

We analyzed work orders from 6K+ Dental locations, revealing key trends in maintenance spending and NTE limit usage.



PRIMARY TRADE	WORK ORDER VOLUME	AVERAGE ORIGINAL NTE	MEDIAN INVOICE AMOUNT
Dental Equipment	<div></div>	\$497	\$169
Plumbing	<div></div>	\$478	\$400
HVAC	<div></div>	\$668	\$491
General Repairs	<div></div>	\$433	\$337
Lighting	<div></div>	\$479	\$431
Electrical	<div></div>	\$505	\$399
Janitorial	<div></div>	\$225	\$160

Insights

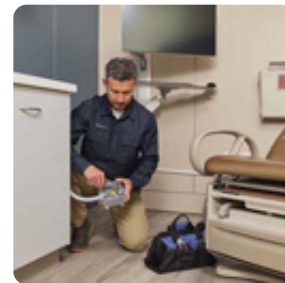
- Dental Equipment Repair shows the most dramatic cost variance, with NTEs nearly three times higher than median invoices (\$497 vs \$169).
- The majority of service requests for specialty dental equipment are completed by the supplier/manufacturer, due to existing warranties and service contracts. Therefore, the median invoice amount is significantly lower than the NTE.



Develop clear criteria for emergency service requests to avoid unnecessary premium charges.

Dental: NTE-to-Invoice Ratios

A breakdown of spending patterns across five primary trades and their corresponding hourly SLAs.



PRIMARY TRADE	4-8 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	8-24 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	24-72 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	>72 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE
Dental Equipment	\$676	\$215	\$474	\$178	\$479	\$165	\$726	\$316
Plumbing	\$591	\$456	\$509	\$400	\$411	\$348	\$558	\$440
HVAC	\$577	\$469	\$688	\$487	\$799	\$515	\$760	\$511
General Repairs	\$486	\$413	\$376	\$300	\$399	\$310	\$537	\$397
Lighting	\$411	\$452	\$500	\$480	\$432	\$415	\$644	\$487

Experts Weigh In

"To gain more control through a higher proposal percentage and increase visibility into items not covered by existing warranties and service contracts, consider lowering NTEs for dental equipment for non-critical assets. When NTE increase requests arise, ensure you have a pre-defined process for approving costs that exceed the NTE, so there's no delay in critical services."

Senior Manager Marketplaces Program Management & Operations, Stefanie Teintze



Consider implementing separate NTE tiers for specialized dental equipment versus general facility maintenance.

QSR: 2024 Service Spend

We analyzed work orders from 16K+ Quick Service Restaurant locations, revealing key trends in maintenance spending and NTE limit usage.



PRIMARY TRADE	WORK ORDER COUNT	AVERAGE ORIGINAL NTE	MEDIAN INVOICE AMOUNT
Plumbing	<div></div>	\$593	\$439
Refrigeration	<div></div>	\$632	\$501
Kitchen Equipment	<div></div>	\$645	\$472
HVAC	<div></div>	\$814	\$570
General Repairs	<div></div>	\$602	\$470
Electrical	<div></div>	\$567	\$422
Hardware	<div></div>	\$527	\$207

Insights

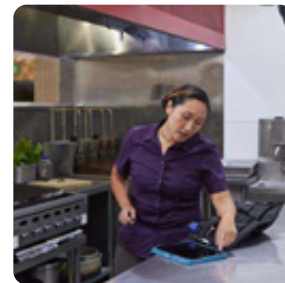
- Trades involving critical assets typically have higher NTEs. Further optimization can be achieved by making targeted adjustments at the problem code level.
- When comparing QSR data to Full-Service Restaurants (FSR) data, we found NTEs were 23% higher on average for FSR clients.



NTE's have a direct impact on provider work order acceptance, first-time completion rates, and median invoice amounts.

QSR: NTE-to-Invoice Ratios

A breakdown of QSR spending patterns across five primary trades and their corresponding hourly SLAs.



PRIMARY TRADE	4-8 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	8-24 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	24-72 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	>72 HOURS NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE
Plumbing	\$665	\$376	\$552	\$395	\$657	\$453	\$507	\$437
Refrigeration	\$758	\$519	\$620	\$584	\$628	\$482	\$534	\$482
Kitchen Equipment	\$636	\$478	\$639	\$470	\$674	\$455	\$554	\$407
HVAC	\$796	\$361	\$788	\$536	\$939	\$553	\$871	\$695
General Repairs	\$552	\$372	\$557	\$450	\$599	\$485	\$622	\$450

Experts Weigh In

"In the longer service windows of 24-72+ hours, you'll notice higher costs. This often happens when urgent repairs uncover additional unforeseen issues that require more time and parts, or when larger-scale projects are involved."

"Additionally, routine planned maintenance visits, occasionally reveal further issues, commonly known as 'Found on PM' repairs. By proactively scheduling regular maintenance, you can address these issues early, helping to manage budgets and reduce overall service call costs."

Marketplaces Project Manager, Jennifer Sanchez



Consider setting up tiered NTE thresholds based on asset type and importance to operations.

Retail Apparel: 2024 Service Spend

We analyzed work orders from 23K+ Retail Apparel locations, revealing key trends in maintenance spending and NTE limit usage.



PRIMARY TRADE	WORK ORDER COUNT	AVERAGE ORIGINAL NTE	MEDIAN INVOICE AMOUNT
HVAC	<div></div>	\$1,243	\$622
Plumbing	<div></div>	\$613	\$491
Electrical	<div></div>	\$618	\$550
General Repairs	<div></div>	\$613	\$450
Locks & Keys	<div></div>	\$524	\$308

Insights

- HVAC represents both the highest work order volume and highest NTE limits, reflecting its critical role in retail environments.
- NTEs can vary significantly by region. For clients with locations concentrated in a single state or region, further adjustments to NTEs can be made based on location-specific data to ensure alignment with local markets.



Set lower or predefined NTEs for preventative maintenance and routine tasks like janitorial.

Retail Apparel: NTE-to-Invoice Ratios

Retail Apparel spending patterns across five primary trades and their corresponding hourly SLAs.



PRIMARY TRADE	4-8 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	8-24 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	24-72 HOUR NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE	>72 HOURS NTE	AVERAGE INVOICE
HVAC	\$714	\$570	\$1,685	\$782	\$1,309	\$837	\$1,302	\$450
Plumbing	\$563	\$586	\$619	\$570	\$628	\$435	\$468	\$256
Electrical	\$571	\$694	\$568	\$544	\$656	\$565	\$593	\$495
General Repairs	\$434	\$530	\$567	\$551	\$602	\$441	\$644	\$396
Locks & Keys	\$496	\$362	\$506	\$324	\$527	\$270	\$430	\$240

Experts Weigh In

"When it comes to the higher NTE's we're seeing in HVAC, there are a few possibilities. It could be due to the higher cost of parts and labor rates — and overall HVAC labor rates tend to be higher, at least in part, because of the tech shortage.

"It may also be because of more access issues and difficulties within mall locations, as well as the limited list of providers 'authorized' to service those locations. And lastly, this is an industry that places an especially high priority on customer comfort, and HVAC is the very foundation of that."

Senior Trade Specialist, Millard Wilson



Optimize further by setting separate NTE thresholds for customer-facing areas and back-of-house repairs.



Optimize Your NTEs and Maximize Uptime

Ready to transform your NTE strategy into a powerful tool for operational success? At ServiceChannel, we specialize in turning data-driven insights into actionable outcomes, empowering facilities managers to streamline their processes, cut unnecessary costs, and ensure peak performance.

Connect with one of our NTE experts today to unlock the full potential of optimizing your NTEs — and elevate your facilities management game.

[GET IN TOUCH](#)