



What's the Maintenance Cost of Digital Signs?

THE BIG UNKNOWN

What is the maintenance cost of digital signs? You may be contemplating digital signage as a potential marketing tool but you're concerned about the after-sale costs. Just like any other equipment, digital signs wear out over time, but how much do they cost to repair?

Holiday Signs specializes in LED Digital Signs which can sometimes be confused with two other types of digital signs: LCD and Incandescent bulb type signs. This article will focus on LED-type sign repair and not LCD or Incandescent type digital signs, however, if you still have an incandescent message sign, you should replace it as soon as you can if you're concerned about sign maintenance costs.

LED MESSAGE CENTERS

In this article, I will be discussing maintenance issues with on-premise digital signs. These types of signs are usually free-standing out by the road or sometimes building mounted. Common brands include Daktronics, Watchfire, Optec, and Formetco.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

If something can go wrong, maybe it will, but since the leading digital sign manufacturers offer 5-year parts warranties, you won't have to worry about maintenance costs with parts for at least five years. Some manufacturers' warranties include service, so check to see if that's an option. If not, typical labor rates for sign repairs apply and will vary depending on the scope of the repairs and distance from our shop in Chester, Virginia. Digital sign repair labor rates are calculated including travel to and from the site and on average in the Richmond area can range from around \$100-\$220 per hour depending on the number of qualified technicians and type of equipment needed for the job.

What special situations could increase the bill?

- *Signs of above average size or height;*
- *Signs that would require special access;*
- *Service situations needing special equipment, lots of trouble-shooting, or multiple trips.*

Here are the main things, in order of predominance, that go wrong with digital signs, requiring maintenance. If a warranty expires, the sign equipment owner would have to pay for parts and labor as needed unless he purchases an extended warranty.

1. Module failure: Sometimes you will notice a black square on your sign, indicating a module is out. This is easy to troubleshoot and usually takes less than an hour to swap out parts for the repair. The cause is normally a loose connection or a short in the input/output connections.

2. Power Supply failure: If an entire portion of the sign goes out, it usually indicates a power supply problem. Like module replacement, the usual time needed to replace a power supply is typically about an hour for the experienced sign mechanic or perhaps a little more on older digital sign models.

3. Communications failure: Many EMC's use wireless communications technology so a clear path from the sign to the antenna needs to be maintained. If the path is too far or if it has obstructions, then your software may not be able to communicate with the sign and you will have maintenance issues. We have had several issues where ice has been the culprit in breaking antennas. In these cases, customers removed the source of the problem and it was no longer a service issue. Time requirements for communications repairs are hard to estimate time since each case is different.

4. LED failure: LED's normally never burn out, they just get dimmer over time. If individual LED's should go noticeably out before their time, the repair would be similar to a module failure where the entire module of LED's is replaced.

5. Controller failure: If the entire sign goes out and it's not an antenna issue, then you may need a new controller. Labor time for EMC controller replacement is usually a little longer than module or power supply repair, and sometimes extra time is needed for troubleshooting with the manufacturer.

I hope this has given you a little more insight on the maintenance cost of digital signs.



**“check out the mfr.’s
warranty.”**

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