Temperature-Sensitive Packaging Snapshot

In 2015, Pharmaceutical & Medical Packaging News surveyed the Supply Chain Expert Community to better understand the effort manufacturers of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and other healthcare-related products put into developing cold-chain packaging—and the results were revealing.

Below you’ll find some of the survey findings along with a few insights from UPS.

Type of temperature-sensitive products shipped

- 31% refrigerated products
- 51% controlled room temperature products
- 17% frozen products
- 32% products that cannot be allowed to freeze

Insight: The industry is coming to accept that all products are temperature-sensitive.

Type of cold-chain packaging used

- Off-the-shelf solution
  - 40%
- Custom-designed packaging
  - 18%
- Mix of both off-the-shelf and custom-designed packaging
  - 42%

Insight: Fewer than one in five companies has allocated resources to create a complete, scientifically customized packaging line. Nothing else can ensure optimally efficient product protection. Have the other companies done enough to ensure adequate patient protection?

Temperature-sensitive packaging efficiency

In answer to the question, “Are you content your packaging is more or less as efficient as it could be?”, 28% of respondents answered, “No.”

Insight: Products are traveling in packaging that is either over or under engineered, increasing costs or potentially putting patients in danger.
Expert packaging review

22% have never had their cold-chain packaging reviewed by an expert
45% have no plans to have their packaging audited or reviewed by an expert

Recommendation: Packaging should be reevaluated every two years.

How cold-chain packaging is qualified

24% follow ISTA Standard 20
48% use package supplier’s qualification standard
44% have tested packages in an environmental chamber

About half trust the package supplier’s qualification standard.

Insight: It’s crucial to use the right package supplier, because standards vary widely—and not all may be right for you.

Known ambient environmental conditions

Only about one in five respondents has a complete picture from a professional study of the environment through which they send their shipments.

Insight: If you don’t know the conditions through which your products pass, you can’t package them correctly.

Priority given to packaging as a source of cost savings

Top priority
Some priority
No priority

Only about one-third of respondents said they make packaging a top priority and understand the cost implications of selecting the right packaging.

Tolerance for spoilage during transit

More than half of respondents reported that they had a goal of less than 0.5% rate of spoilage in transit.

Insight: Answers to other survey questions, however, suggest that the supply chain managers are not always adequately resourced to meet this task.

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