



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Fact or fiction:

What do you know about your commissary benefit?

*By Kevin L. Robinson,
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Note: For photos related to this news release, please go to <https://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/sets/72157651118992477>.

FORT LEE, Va. – What a commissary patron knows about their commissary benefit – how it works, its history and its features – can make all the difference in how they use it.

Just ask Air Force Command Chief Master Sgt. Stuart M. Allison, the Defense Commissary Agency’s senior enlisted advisor to the director.

“The best way to use the commissary benefit is to be an informed shopper,” Allison said. “By ‘informed,’ I mean being aware of what the benefit is and how it began. Do you know about our great savings in produce, meat and other grocery products? The more you know, the more the benefit works for you.”

So, to help commissary shoppers, here’s Allison’s quick guide of *fact-versus-fiction* information:

- *The commissary is only authorized for married military members living in on-base housing:* **Fiction.** Where a person lives or their marital status does not influence commissary access. All that matters is their status as an authorized patron. Active duty military, reservists, retirees, 100 percent disabled military veterans, Medal of Honor recipients and their authorized family members are all authorized to shop.

- *Case lot sales can save patrons upwards of 50 percent:* **Fact.** DeCA's Commissary Customer Appreciation case lot sales offer savings of 50 percent or more on club pack and full-case items. Customers can go to www.commissaries.com to find out scheduled sales. They can also find this information on their store's Web page.
- *The Defense Commissary Agency isn't connected to its patrons in cyberspace:* **Fiction.** DeCA reaches hundreds of thousands of patrons online through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Foursquare and Pinterest. Through social media, DeCA gets instant feedback from customers on promotions, store conditions and product preferences. The sites also draw patrons to www.commissaries.com for more information to maximize their benefit.
- *DeCA has a rewards card that gives its patrons access to digital coupons:* **Fact.** The Commissary Rewards Card is a convenient way for customers to save even more with about 160 digital coupons. Patrons can download those digital coupons to the Commissary Rewards Card from the commissary website or from Smart Source "direct to card." iPhone and Android apps make it even easier for customers to review their coupon accounts, as well as locate commissaries and their contact information.
- *Patrons can only access commissary products in a commissary:* **Fiction.** DeCA's Guard/Reserve On-Site sales extend the commissary benefit to Guard/Reserve members and their families who don't live near a commissary. These sales are hosted by nearby commissaries in cooperation with Guard/Reserve units that have at least 150 members stationed in an area. Although designed for reservists, any authorized patron can shop during the sales. A listing of on-site sales can be found at www.commissaries.com.
- *The 5-percent surcharge is a tax:* **Fiction.** The 5-percent surcharge, mandated by Congress, is returned to commissary patrons in the form of continually improved commissary facilities – new stores, as well as renovations of existing ones. The savings of 30 percent includes the 5-percent surcharge.
- *Military commissaries date back to the 1860s:* **Fact.** Although DeCA was formed in 1991, the modern era of sales commissaries actually began in 1867. It was then that enlisted men received the same at-cost purchasing privileges officers had already enjoyed for four decades. From the start, commissaries were meant to allow the Army to "care for its own." The stores provided wholesome food beyond official rations, and the savings supplemented military pay.
- *Baggers are commissary employees:* **Fiction.** Baggers are not commissary employees, and are paid solely by the tips from commissary patrons in exchange for bagging/carryout

services. Baggers are self-employed and work under a license agreement with an installation commander.

“Doing your homework can pay off at the cash register,” Allison said. “If you want to save more, boost your commissary knowledge. Tune in to DeCA’s social media sites, and check the commissary website for the current sales flyer, ongoing promotions, the lineup of Commissary Value Brands and available digital coupons for your Commissary Rewards Card.

“It’s your benefit,” he added. “Take the time to understand it and use it.”

-DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Commissaries provide a military benefit and make no profit on the sale of merchandise. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. By shopping regularly in the commissary, patrons save an average of 30 percent or more on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings amounting to thousands of dollars annually. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*

Stay Connected to Your Commissary Benefit

COMMISSARIES.COM: Visit www.commissaries.com to learn more about the Defense Commissary Agency: check out the latest news, find a store near you, see what’s on sale, create a shopping list, learn of food and product recalls, scan employment opportunities, read frequently asked questions, submit a customer comment form online through DeCA’s Your Action Line and more.

COMMISSARY CONNECTION: Stay connected with the latest news about your most valued benefit, Hot Links to additional savings, shopping sprees, contests, commissary promotions, events and more, go to www.commissaries.com/subscribe.cfm and subscribe to the Commissary Connection newsletter.

FACEBOOK: Visit www.facebook.com/YourCommissary, DeCA’s Facebook page, where you can post comments and share news, photos and videos.

YOUTUBE: To see DeCA’s latest videos, visit www.youtube.com/DefenseCommissary.

TWITTER: To see DeCA’s latest "tweets," visit www.twitter.com/YourCommissary.

PINTEREST: To see DeCA’s theme-based image collections, visit <http://www.pinterest.com/YourCommissary>.

FLICKR: To see DeCA’s latest photographs, visit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/>.