



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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**Release Number:** 33-09  
**Date:** April 16, 2009  
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## Every day is Earth Day at the commissary

*By Kevin L. Robinson,  
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**FORT LEE, Va.** – Every day is Earth Day as far as the Defense Commissary Agency is concerned. The annual celebration of the environment has become part of a growing campaign to make the commissary benefit “greener.”

“Our goal every day is to deliver a commissary benefit that does not negatively impact the environment,” said Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., DeCA director and CEO. “Earth Day helps us focus more attention on preserving and protecting Mother Earth, not just for ourselves or our customers, but for the generations that follow.”

Earth Day, celebrated on April 22, is a national observance established in 1970 to make people more aware of the environment. As part of this observance, DeCA is promoting a number of “green”-theme products from April 16-29 in military commissaries, all to support protecting the Earth’s natural resources.

Customers can expect to see extra savings on items such as laundry and dish detergents, diapers, organic products, paper products such as toilet tissue and paper towels made from recycled paper, and packaging that uses less resources and breaks down more naturally.

“We have definitely increased the number of green-theme items to mirror a growing consumer demand,” said Charlie Dowlen, promotions manager for the DeCA sales directorate. “Consumers today are receiving a tremendous amount of information about the importance of taking care of ‘Mother Earth’ and reducing waste and contaminants. They want to do their part

to protect our environment by purchasing eco-friendly items.”

Indeed, commissary customers have shown that “going green” isn’t limited to Earth Day. Energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs or CFLs – the swirl-shaped bulbs – flew off the shelves in fiscal 2008, eclipsing by 25 percent the agency’s goal to sell 1 million. Since January, weekly CFL bulb sales have averaged 100,000 items, and customers purchased more than 2 million reusable shopping bags in fiscal 2008.

More “green” cleaning products are now available at stores worldwide. These items include concentrated floor and surface cleaners and laundry products that don’t require as much water as “unconcentrated” versions. The payoff is that the lighter products save money on transportation costs and use less plastic, which reduces the amount of trash.

The emphasis on going green is part of an ongoing culture change at DeCA. In 2005, DeCA identified “environmental responsibility” as one of its major priorities and created an environmental management system to oversee it by focusing on the following initiatives:

- **Reducing solid waste through recycling and reuse.** Since October 2007, commissaries recycled nearly 64,000 tons of cardboard, returning millions of dollars to the DeCA surcharge fund, which pays for the building of new stores and renovation of existing ones.
- **Saving energy and water.** Agency water usage was reduced by 11 percent in fiscal 2008. DeCA tested the light-emitting diode, or LED, freezer lighting demonstration at its Fort Meade, Md., store in 2008, which reduced power requirements by 85 percent from 3600 watts to 540 watts. This experiment led to design improvements for future stores.
- **Purchasing green-related materials.** This program encourages purchasing recycled content, energy-efficient, bio-based and low toxicity products.
- **Controlling pests** (insects and rodents) and reducing use of pesticides.
- **Designing eco-friendly facilities** that save energy and water. For example, the commissary at Naval Base San Diego was designed with daylight harvesting to reduce need for interior lighting on sunny days.
- **Reducing use of toxic materials** and replacing toxic or hazardous materials with “green,” nontoxic alternatives.
- **Reducing ozone-depleting substances.** DeCA is tracking equipment containing refrigerants that may be harmful to the environment to repair leaks and find alternative substances.
- **Electronic stewardship.** This means purchasing computers that save energy.

“DeCA acknowledges the importance of the environment to our local and global communities – not just on Earth Day but every day,” said E. Carroll Shepherd III, DeCA’s energy and environmental manager. “From the water we use to the energy that powers our stores, DeCA strives to conserve and protect the environment while balancing these efforts with sound business practices.”

For more information about DeCA’s environmentally friendly initiatives go to the agency’s new Go Green Web page at <http://www.commissaries.com/green/>.

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**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. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. 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.*