



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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DeCA rated among best for its ability to ensure correct delivery of commissary benefit

By Kevin L. Robinson

FORT LEE, Va. – Many businesses claim they’re serving their customers well, but customer feedback often reveals something else. The Defense Commissary Agency claims it provides world-class customer service when it delivers its premier benefit, and the agency’s fiscal 2009 statement of assurance proves it does.

DeCA tied for first place on its fiscal 2009 statement, with a score of 3.2 on a 5-point scale, competing with three other Department of Defense activities: the Department of the Army, the Defense Information Systems Agency and the U.S. Special Operations Command. In fiscal 2008, DeCA had scored a 3.0 and placed third, but this is the third time it has achieved a first-place score, scoring first in 2006 and 2007.

“We have become a torchbearer in accurately reflecting to the American public how we do business,” said Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., DeCA director and CEO. “Today, it’s important to our credibility as a world-class benefit to ensure that we continue to operate our commissaries efficiently and effectively. That’s why achieving a good score on the statement of assurance means so much.”

All military activities must file a statement of assurance with the Office of Management and Budget by Sept. 1 each year. A statement of assurance is an agency director’s written verification that their organization’s internal controls are sound – or in financial language, “unqualified” – with no weaknesses that had to be reported outside the agency.

Internal controls are the organization, policies and procedures that managers use to achieve results and safeguard the integrity of their programs. By assessing and testing its internal controls, an agency can be confident that its objectives are being achieved in the following categories: (1) the efficiency and effectiveness of operations; (2) the reliability of financial reporting; and (3) the agency's compliance with all laws and regulations.

"Our success with the statement of assurance is a testimony to what all of our employees do and how that dedicated effort impacts our commissary customers," said Pam Conklin, DeCA's chief financial executive. "Through our statement, we are telling the American taxpayer that we, as an agency, are paying attention to every detail in our day-to-day operations. And, that makes us a more efficient organization."

DeCA's statement for 2009 reflected an increased emphasis on internal controls, starting with the agency director and spreading throughout the workforce, said Billie Sue Goff, manager for DeCA's internal controls program. Last year's report emphasized the employees' awareness of their role in internal controls. Employee training stressed job performance and the impact on the agency's accountability.

"Our agency director, Mr. Sakowitz, and our chief financial executive, Ms. Conklin, have been at the forefront of our program's success," Goff said. "Mr. Sakowitz makes internal controls a high priority in DeCA and ensures that it is on the 'radar' of all employees."

Throughout the reporting period, DeCA managers at headquarters and region levels are responsible for gathering information on the internal controls performance of their directorates. Goff said next year's statement will include an even broader evaluation of DeCA's functions that dig deeper into how the agency operates at the store level.

Sakowitz said DeCA's continued success is also a tribute to the hard work of the agency's analysts and accountants, who take attention to detail to new heights in preparing the statement. But in the end, he added, attention to internal controls isn't just a financial responsibility.

"Internal controls simply mean that we all do our jobs to the best of our abilities," Sakowitz said. "When we deliver the commissary benefit, we must ensure that this mission is world class in every way."

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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 \$3,300 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.