



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## DeCA asks patrons to reduce paper, plastic bag usage

*By Courtney Rogers,  
DeCA customer relations specialist*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – Being earth-friendly is an ongoing priority for the Defense Commissary Agency. That’s why this Earth Day – and every day – DeCA is asking its customers to do their part in helping commissaries be environmentally responsible and save on operating costs by reducing the use of paper and plastic bags.

“Operating in an environmentally responsible manner is an important part of delivering a premier commissary benefit to our military customers,” DeCA Director and CEO Joseph H. Jeu said. “We are committed to minimizing our operational impact on the environment to help preserve it for both our current and future customers.”

Commissary store directors were recently asked to enlist the support of head baggers to reduce their use of paper and plastic bags by not double-bagging or bagging large items with handles unless a customer specifically requests it. They were also asked to give each bag a “boost” by placing just one more item in each bag. Not only will these practices serve to reduce each commissary’s impact on the environment, they could also save the agency more than \$2 million per year in supply costs if commissaries reduce bag use by just one bag per transaction.

The reduction of paper and plastic bag use is part of DeCA’s environmental management program to reduce operational costs while building eco-friendly stores, monitoring and reducing energy consumption, reducing solid waste through recycling and reuse, conserving water and purchasing green-related materials. DeCA is also seeking to reduce dependency on paper and

plastic bags by encouraging customers to purchase and use reusable bags. The reusable bag program has been very popular with commissary customers, who have purchased more than 4.1 million of the bags since fiscal 2008.

But the effort doesn't stop there: Customers must actually use the reusable bags in order to reduce the amount of paper and plastic bags used in the commissary. Unlike retail stores and military exchanges, which make a profit that can be used to fund marketing programs like discounts for using reusable bags, commissaries cannot offer such incentives. Because their operating budget comes from appropriated funds, and they sell groceries at cost, they make no profit to pay for such programs. However, commissaries do work to make it easier for their customers to use their own bags.

To help accomplish this, DeCA recently added a reusable bag button to its self-checkouts in commissaries around the world that allows customers to reset the scales without cashier intervention. This allows customers with reusable bags to check themselves out more quickly and easily. Customers can also reuse paper and plastic bags on their own groceries, provided that the bags are clean and will safely hold their groceries.

“We are working every day to operate in an environmentally and fiscally conscious manner,” Jeu said. “But the way to achieve the most substantial results for our future is to partner with our customers to create a culture shift in daily shopping habits. Over time, a small change – just one less paper or plastic bag used per transaction – can lead to big results.”

**-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. 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 amounting to thousands of dollars annually. For current savings figures for various groups – single member up to a family of seven – visit <http://www.commissaries.com>. 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.*