



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## DeCA sorts its waste for a better environment

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**NOTE:** To access photos related to the Defense Commissary Agency's waste sort study, go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/sets/72157629040880957/>. To access video footage, click on the following YouTube links: <http://youtu.be/tpNXrvx0h-Y>, [http://youtu.be/-RLZqfUUu\\_0](http://youtu.be/-RLZqfUUu_0), <http://youtu.be/sqWqc5X63Cc>, <http://youtu.be/WnwbTC2PHeo> and <http://youtu.be/b4WxOP-XVwY>.

**FORT LEE, Va.** – The Defense Commissary Agency took dumpster diving to an extreme in 2011, as contractors sorted through dumpsters at 10 commissaries throughout the United States as part of a waste sort study.

Working under the Department of Defense's Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan, DeCA spent several days collecting, sorting and weighing its garbage to learn its contents and determine how to keep more of it from the nation's landfills.

"I'd like to see a zero footprint, if you would," said Joseph H. Jeu, DeCA director and CEO. "Where everything that comes into the stores would get recycled, composted or used somehow, instead of going into the waste stream. It's a very ambitious goal, but other stores and industries have the same goal. I think it's achievable, if not today, then sometime in the future."

Through waste sorts, commissaries can focus on a targeted goal to increase recycling and compostable rates. The waste sort goals match DeCA's Effective Waste Management Plan objectives, which are to reduce solid-waste volumes and costs while increasing recycling rates.

DeCA chose stores from across sales bands and geographical areas to sort their dumpsters. What they found was that the current waste stream consisted of outdated produce,

dairy, bakery and meat products. It also includes a limited amount of waxed cardboard, which cannot be recycled now, along with minor amounts of plastic and metal.

DeCA Environmental Engineer Mark Leeper said results from the study concluded about 70-75 percent of the solid waste generated by commissaries is convertible.

“This means, they can be diverted from the landfill and converted from waste to energy or used for compost,” Leeper said. “Furthermore, the results will be used to determine if the number of refuse containers at commissaries can be reduced. If so, this will decrease the amount of defense working capital funds being utilized for solid waste expenses.”

DeCA is not in this alone. Installations worldwide have the same goals, as they also have to reduce the waste stream under the DoD Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan.

“One of the things we are looking at is a gasification process where we can take compostables, put them through this process and end up with soil that can be used instead of fertilizer,” Jeu said. “If we could join forces with the base and the dining facilities, I think we could make this process mutually cost effective.”

“Through actions related to the waste sorts, DeCA hopes to reduce the agency’s carbon footprint and save operating funds,” said Mike Dowling, acting deputy director and chief operating officer. “The cost of taking waste to landfills comes out of appropriated funds; so anything we do to save money is good for the taxpayer.

“It is good for our customers, and it makes us a good steward of our taxpayer’s money,” Dowling added. “Plus, we can use appropriated dollars for things that add value for our customers.”