



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

Office of Corporate Communications
1300 E Avenue □ Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8524 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 4-8524

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

www.commissaries.com

Release Number: 11-09
Date: January 29, 2009
Contact: Kevin Robinson, public affairs specialist
Tel.: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8773
E-mail: kevin.robinson@deca.mil

Commissary benefit saves customers more money

*By Kevin L. Robinson
DeCA public affairs specialist*

FORT LEE, Va. – There’s more pocket money for service members and their families when they shop consistently in the commissary – nearly \$3,400 in fact for a family of four based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture survey that measures household grocery store purchases.

“In tough economic times our customers can always depend on their commissary benefit to help them make ends meet,” said Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., Defense Commissary Agency director and chief executive officer. “This survey validates our motto that more than ever before ‘*The Commissary – It’s Worth the Trip!*’ ”

Each month, the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion calculates household purchases of grocery, meat and produce items. Once a year in October, DeCA’s sales directorate examines the USDA’s figures to determine monetary savings amounts for its customers in various family-sized units – a single military member, a couple, a family of three or four – based on the commissary’s savings of more than 30 percent (*See savings charts for 2006-08 at end of story*):

- **A family of four saves nearly \$3,400** (\$3,353) annually based on spending an average of \$898 per month or \$10,783 annually. Previous savings calculated in October 2007 were about \$3,100.
- **A family of three saves more than \$2,600** (\$2,625) annually based on spending an average of \$703 per month or \$8,442 annually. Previous savings in October 2007 were more than \$2,400.

- **A couple saves more than \$2,100** (\$2,128) annually based on spending an average of \$570 per month or \$6,844 annually. Previous savings in October 2007 were more than \$1,900.
- **A single service member saves nearly \$1,200** (\$1,161) annually based on spending an average of \$311 per month or \$3,733 annually. Previous savings in October 2007 were about \$1,600.

Commissary savings percentages are calculated based on an annual market basket study. Procedures differ somewhat depending on geographic location. In the continental United States, DeCA captures prices through Nielsen’s database of commissary and industry front end sales volume on more than 30,000 grocery items with a Universal Product Code. Pricing comparisons for meat and produce department items in the continental United States are accomplished through in-store audits at 30 randomly selected commissaries to compare them with commercial retail stores within commuting distance.

Outside the continental United States (Alaska, Hawaii, the Far East, Europe, Guam and Puerto Rico), DeCA conducts additional in-store audits, using a broad sample of grocery, meat and produce items. Savings percentages compare commissary prices, which include DeCA’s 5-percent surcharge, to commercial prices with any applicable sales taxes included.

“We exist to deliver a commissary benefit to our authorized customers, the men and women and their families who sacrifice so much in the defense of this great nation,” Sakowitz said. “The concept is simple: We sell items at cost, and if you shop regularly in a commissary for your grocery needs, you will save at least 30 percent or more. That’s extra money you can apply to paying off credit card debt, your children’s education or whatever else you need.”

The following charts show savings amounts calculated from USDA figures published in October for 2006, 2007 and 2008:

2006

Family size	Monthly cost	Annual cost	Annual savings
Single	\$268.06	\$3,216.67	\$1,029.34
Married	\$491.42	\$5,897.04	\$1,887.05
Married w/one child	\$601.42	\$7,217.03	\$2,309.45
Married w/two children	\$770.40	\$9,244.80	\$2,958.34

2007

Family size	Monthly cost	Annual cost	Annual savings
Single	\$282.76	\$3,393.14	\$1,058.66

Married	\$518.39	\$6,220.68	\$1,940.88
Married w/one child	\$641.56	\$7,698.73	\$2,402.05
Married w/two children	\$821.75	\$9,861.80	\$3,076.68

2008

Family size	Monthly cost	Annual cost	Annual savings
Single	\$311.10	\$3,733.20	\$1,161.03
Married	\$570.40	\$6,844.80	\$2,128.73
Married w/one child	\$703.55	\$8,442.63	\$2,625.66
Married w/two children	\$898.60	\$10,783.20	\$3,353.58

- 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 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.*