



# 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](http://www.commissaries.com)

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**Contact:** Kevin Robinson, public affairs specialist  
**Tel.:** (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8773  
**E-mail:** [kevin.robinson@deca.mil](mailto:kevin.robinson@deca.mil)

## Being 'green' is key part of commissary operations

*By Mike McCarthy,*

*Environmental management service group leader*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – Each year, the Defense Commissary Agency uses more than 200 million gallons of water, spends more than \$60 million on utility services and generates more solid waste than most mid-sized cities. As DeCA delivers the commissary benefit, it is also responsible for eliminating or limiting any negative impact its operations may have on natural resources.

The agency's environmental policy spells out its mandate to make environmental protection as important to daily operations as providing quality and safe products to millions of authorized customers worldwide.

“DeCA understands the importance of minimizing the environmental impact on both the retail food industry and the armed forces community and is committed to setting an example as a leader in environmental performance when it makes good business sense to do so,” said DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr. “Everyone benefits from these initiatives – our customers, our installation partners, our employees, and most importantly, the environment.”

The mission of implementing DeCA's environmental policy and monitoring its compliance with relative executive orders, laws and other regulatory requirements belongs to the agency's environmental management system, also known as EMS.

“Environmental performance is key to DeCA's continued success,” said E. Carroll Shepherd III, DeCA's energy and environmental manager. “Our improved environmental performance lessens our environmental footprint, enhances quality of life and improves our store

operations. Since 2005, our environmental management system has supported this strategic initiative and our environmental policy holds us accountable.”

“Going Green” has become a way of life for the commissary agency. In fiscal 2008 alone, DeCA significantly increased the number of environmentally friendly products – including recycled paper products, detergents and cleaners, and organic products – available to its customers. The agency also sold more than 1 million compact fluorescent light bulbs. Those bulbs are projected to generate more than \$40 million in energy savings for our customers while reducing carbon dioxide emissions by more than 200,000 pounds.

Commissary operations also have been enhanced. DeCA has saved more than \$50 million in energy costs since 1995. The recycling program has prevented more than 85,000 tons of cardboard from going to landfills, generated more than \$8.5 million in revenue over the last two years and created potential solid waste cost avoidance of \$650,000 annually. These initiatives and others, such as DeCA’s integrated pest management and electronic stewardship programs, are all driven by the agency’s environmental management system, which in turn is driven by DeCA’s environmental policy.

At the Fort Myer, Va., Commissary, then Store Director Elizabeth Herms and her team were a good example of the environmental policy in action. Through DeCA’s Effective Waste Management Plan they reduced the frequency of waste pickups and created the potential for \$53,000 in cost avoidance and a 350-ton increase in the store’s annual recycling rate.

“All DeCA associates should be aware of the environmental policy and its importance to our day to day operations,” Shepherd said. “Environmental protection is an objective for everybody in DeCA – from the stores to the regions to the headquarters.

“In September, we will undergo a third party audit of our environmental management system to gauge our success in communicating the agency’s environmental initiatives to our employees and their understanding of the environmental policy,” he added. “We are asking all employees to please take the time to review the policy and do their part to help DeCA ‘Go Green.’”

To learn more about DeCA’s environmental protection initiatives, go to the agency’s Go Green page on <http://www.commissaries.com/green/index.cfm>.

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*-- Mike McCarthy is a DeCA contractor with Reynolds, Smith & Hills, Inc.*

**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.*