



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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DeCA leadership informs customers about how commissaries are responding to the COVID-19 outbreak

*By Rear Adm. (Ret.) Robert J. Bianchi,
DOD special assistant for commissary operations*

Note: Go the DeCA website to read this news release [online](#).

FORT LEE, Va. – To our deserving customers: In light of the COVID-19 (the coronavirus) outbreak, we at the Defense Commissary Agency want to reassure you, our valued customers, that the health and welfare of you and our employees are our No. 1 concern. We are following the highest standards of the Department of Defense’s health protection in our stores, which includes wiping down checkout areas, restrooms and shopping carts, routine hand washing and other basic sanitation measures to avoid spreading germs. We’re also encouraging our employees to closely monitor their health and well-being, and asking them to stay home if they, or someone in their household, are sick.

We exist to deliver the commissary benefit to millions of service members and their families worldwide. We stood up our emergency operations center in late February to coordinate all of the agency’s efforts to ensure that commissaries effectively and efficiently respond to this



Rear Adm. (Ret.) Robert J. Bianchi, DOD special assistant for commissary operations

outbreak with the service our military communities need.

You can also rest assured that we work to protect the products on commissary shelves from any compromise of food safety and quality. The sources of the product sold in the commissaries go through an extensive assessment process conducted by military food safety experts before they are deemed an approved source. We have a team of military veterinarians and store food safety specialists constantly inspecting food sources, deliveries and products on commissary shelves to help ensure they're free of potential contaminants.

From a product availability standpoint, we are working with our industry suppliers to support the needs of our senior leaders on the ground at each location. This teamwork is overcoming any challenges that might impact the timely delivery of products to stores. We're increasing deliveries to our commissaries where the need is greatest – especially overseas – to ensure product availability, particularly on items that are in high demand like liquid sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and toilet paper.

We are countering delays of shipboard supply containers by increasing air shipments of high-demand items to our overseas stores as needed. In the Pacific theater alone for example, the agency has airlifted multiple shipments of high-demand items to supplement the stock in its central distribution centers (CDC) that support commissaries in that geographic region.

DeCA crews at our Germersheim Central Distribution Center in Germany are working overtime pulling products for store deliveries. We've done emergency airlifts of meat in Japan and increased the number of pre-made sandwiches and pre-made salads at the Sigonella Commissary in Sicily.

Product availability rates for our CDCs in the Pacific are currently at 94 percent and in Europe at 95 percent, which is excellent. Availability in the CDCs is vital to our stores' ability to restock from day to day. Products supplied via airlift average seven to nine days from the time the order is transmitted until it is received at the CDC; orders transported by ship to Pacific CDCs average 21-25 days and to Europe in 14 days.

Every day we are going above and beyond to ensure our military communities are supplied. We will continue to fully maintain this level of support throughout the duration of the crisis wherever necessary.

At this time, we want you to know there is no need for panic buying. If you happen to see empty shelves in the store please be patient – the store will be restocked often the very next day. Please note, at certain locations, installation leadership has deemed it necessary to implement purchase limitations on particular products to ensure that the commissary can meet the increased demand. Also, some stores overseas have started instituting social distancing for customers in

line.

Preparing for and responding to emergencies is nothing new for DeCA. Over the years, our commissaries have dealt with all manner of natural and manmade crises. Working with military leaders during such times, our dedicated employees and industry suppliers continued to deliver the benefit. And we will continue to do so in response to these events.

Please be assured that DeCA's objective right now is to provide for you and your families with necessary goods and to make sure our stores remain safe and clean. For more information about DeCA's response to the coronavirus, go to the [commissary website](#).

Thank you for your service to our nation!

-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. Commissaries provide a military benefit, saving authorized patrons thousands of dollars annually on their purchases compared to similar products at commercial retailers. The discounted prices include a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. 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.*

Stay Connected to Your Commissary Benefit

COMMISSARIES.COM: Visit www.commissaries.com to learn more about the Defense Commissary Agency: check out the latest news, find a store near you, see what's on sale, create a shopping list, learn of food and product recalls, scan employment opportunities, read frequently asked questions, submit a customer comment form online through DeCA's Your Action Line and more.

COMMISSARY CONNECTION E-NEWSLETTER: Stay connected with the latest news about your most valued benefit, Hot Links to additional savings, shopping sprees, contests, commissary promotions, events and more, go to www.commissaries.com/subscribe.cfm and subscribe to the Commissary Connection newsletter.

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