



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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In time of need

Commissaries support their military communities during coronavirus outbreak

*By Kevin L. Robinson,
DeCA public affairs specialist*

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

FORT LEE, Va. – The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) is working with the military communities most impacted by the coronavirus outbreak to increase shipments of high-demand items, particularly hand sanitizers and disinfectant wipes.

DeCA is working with its industry partners daily to procure

and prepare items for shipments to Japan, Korea, and Europe via air and sealift, said Rear Adm. (retired) Robert J. Bianchi, DOD special assistant for commissary operations.



The Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, Commissary set up a "Be Germ free" product display for customers responding to the coronavirus outbreak concerns. The Defense Commissary Agency is ramping up supplies of hand sanitizers and disinfectant wipes to its stores, especially to stores overseas. (Photo courtesy of Kirtland Commissary)

“In light of current events, we’re diligently monitoring inventory levels at our central distribution centers (CDC) on a daily basis and working closely with senior leaders on the ground at each location to overcome any challenges that might impact the timely delivery of products to stores,” Bianchi said. “Right now we’re increasing deliveries to our commissaries in the Pacific and Europe to ensure product availability, and we will continue to fully maintain this level of support throughout the duration of the crisis wherever necessary.”

Delays of shipboard supply containers prompted DeCA to increase air shipments of high-demand items to our overseas stores as needed, particularly products such as hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, toilet paper, disinfectants and other related items. In the Pacific theater alone, for example, the agency has airlifted multiple shipments of high-demand items to supplement the stock in its CDC that support commissaries in that geographic region.

Product availability rates for CDCs in the Pacific are currently at 94 percent and in Europe at 95 percent, which is excellent, Bianchi said. Availability in the CDCs is vital to the store’s 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.

“If you happened to see empty shelves in the store please be patient – the store will be restocked often the very next day,” Bianchi said. “At this time, we recommend to our customers that they calmly purchase what they need and avoid any panic buying to ensure products are available for others in their communities.”

Commissary customers worried about whether or not it’s safe to shop in the store, shouldn’t be, said Army Lt. Col. Angela Parham, DeCA director of health and safety.

“We follow the highest standards of DOD health protection in our stores,” she said. “This means we are always vigilant to ensure our workforce follows the strictest precautionary measures including routine hand washing and other basic sanitation measures to avoid spreading germs.

“Our commissaries undergo daily sanitizing, disinfecting and cleaning regimens tailored to protect our customers’ health,” Parham added. “These routine measures used by food establishments to prevent ordinary foodborne illness also work to keep viruses from spreading and help keep customers and employees from getting sick.”

In situations such as Daegu, South Korea, where transmission of the virus is high outside the installation, more stringent protection measures are being used, including deep store cleanings, Parham said.

“With policies and procedures like that in place, our stores will be using the most extensive protection measures available,” she said. “Ultimately, the way to keep this virus from spreading and the way to keep folks from getting sick are very simple things that we should be doing every flu season anyway.”

Parham strongly advocates calm and common sense for all concerned in the face of growing misinformation.

“I think the most important thing with anything like this, regardless of where you are and what role you’re playing, is to keep your head and make sure you are making good decisions based on facts,” Parham said. “Be sure you are listening to the experts – people working for organizations like the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the WHO (World Health Organization), and your military and civilian public health organizations – and not to everything you see online, and make your choices based on that.”

-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.*

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