



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

**UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

April 12, 2021  
Incorporating Change 4, April 7, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

**SUBJECT:** Directive-type Memorandum 21-003, "Access to Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Category C Online Activities, DoD Commissaries, and Military Service Exchanges"

**References:** Code of Federal Regulations, Title 41  
DoD Directive 5100.87, "Department of Defense Human Resources Activity (DoDHRA)," February 19, 2008, as amended  
DoD Directive 5124.02, "Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R))," June 23, 2008  
DoD Instruction 1015.10, "Military Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs," July 6, 2009, as amended  
DoD Instruction 1330.17, "DoD Commissary Program," June 18, 2014, as amended  
DoD Instruction 1330.21, "Armed Services Exchange Regulations," July 14, 2005

Purpose. In accordance with the authority in DoD Directive 5124.02, this directive-type memorandum (DTM):

- Extends limited online shopping privileges at Category C morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) activities, including Military Service exchanges to:
  - All honorably discharged veterans of the uniformed services (referred to in this DTM as "honorably discharged veterans").
  - All retired DoD and Coast Guard appropriated fund and nonappropriated fund civilian employees (referred to in this DTM as "retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees"), effective within 180 days of the effective date of this DTM.
- Extends in-store and online Military Service exchange shopping access to DoD and Coast Guard appropriated fund and nonappropriated fund civilian employees (referred to in this DTM as "DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees") who are assigned in the United States and U.S. territories and possessions.
- Revises authority and criteria to approve waivers to extend DoD commissary and exchange shopping access to non-DoD Federal employees serving in the U.S. territories and possessions.
- This DTM is effective April 12, 2021; it must be incorporated into DoD Instructions 1015.10, 1330.17, and 1330.21. This DTM will expire effective April 12, 2026.

Applicability. This DTM applies to OSD, the Military Departments (including the Coast Guard at all times, including when it is a Service in the Department of Homeland Security by agreement with that Department), the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within DoD (referred to collectively in this DTM as the “DoD Components”).

Definitions. See Glossary

Policy.

- This DTM extends access to MWR Category C online activities, including the Military Service exchanges, to honorably discharged veterans of the uniformed services and all retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees effective within 180 days of the effective date of this DTM and in accordance with Attachment 2, Paragraph 1 of this DTM.
- DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees who possess a valid DoD-issued common access card (CAC) and who are assigned in the United States or in the U.S. territories and possessions (not under a valid transportation agreement), are allowed access to in-store Military Service exchanges within 30 days after the effective date of this DTM and access to online Military Service exchanges within 180 days after the effective date of this DTM, in accordance with Attachment 2, Paragraph 2.
- Military Service exchange access for DoD and Coast Guard civilian employee CAC holders in foreign countries who are not on transportation agreements is subject to applicable host-nation laws and applicable international agreements, such as status of forces agreements.
- Only the Secretaries of the Military Departments may grant deviations from DoD policy to allow non-DoD Federal employees serving in the U.S. territories and possessions access to DoD commissaries and exchanges in accordance with Attachment 2, Paragraph 4 of this DTM.

Responsibilities. See Attachment 1

Summary of Change 4. This change extends the expiration date for the DTM to April 12, 2026.

Procedures. See Attachment 2

Releasability. Cleared for public release. Available on the Directives Division Website at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/>.

*Virginia S. Penrod*

Virginia S. Penrod  
Acting

Attachments:  
As stated  
Change 4, 04/07/2025

ATTACHMENT 1

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. DIRECTOR, DOD HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITY. Under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Director, DoD Human Resources Activity:

a. Provides a central capability to verify honorably discharged veterans, DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees, and retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees for online benefits eligibility, in accordance with DoD Directive 5100.87.

b. Updates systems, processes, and records as necessary in order to enable online access eligibility authentication of honorably discharged veterans, DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees, and retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees within 180 days of the effective date of this DTM.

2. SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS. The Secretaries of the Military Departments:

a. Ensure that their respective MWR organizations, Military Service exchange systems, and supporting entities implement the procedures in Attachment 2 within 180 days of the effective date of this DTM.

b. Employ processes in coordination with the Defense Manpower Data Center to authenticate honorably discharged veterans, DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees, and retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees for MWR Category C online activity access.

c. Approve limited deviations to DoD policy to allow non-DoD Federal employees serving in the U.S. territories and possessions access to DoD commissary and exchange facilities if the criteria outlined in Attachment 2, Paragraph 4 are met.

3. COMMANDANT OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD. The Commandant of the United States Coast Guard:

a. Ensures that Coast Guard MWR organizations, exchange system, and supporting entities implement the procedures in Attachment 2 within 180 days of the effective date of this DTM.

b. Employs processes in coordination with the Defense Manpower Data Center to authenticate honorably discharged veterans, DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees, and retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees for MWR Category C online activity access.

ATTACHMENT 2

PROCEDURES

1. HONORABLY DISCHARGED VETERAN ACCESS TO MWR CATEGORY C ONLINE ACTIVITIES.

a. Honorably discharged veterans determined as eligible in accordance with the policy established in this DTM will be authorized access to MWR Category C online activities, including the Military Service exchanges, through Defense Manpower Data Center data verification.

b. Honorably discharged veterans may make MWR Category C online activity purchases for themselves and their dependents. These privileges do not extend directly to those dependents.

c. Honorably discharged veterans authorized MWR Category C online activity shopping privileges solely by this DTM are not authorized to:

(1) Receive a DoD identification card; or

(2) Gain access to DoD installations and other DoD property upon which physical MWR activities are located.

2. DOD AND COAST GUARD CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE ONLINE AND IN-STORE ACCESS TO MILITARY SERVICE EXCHANGES.

a. DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees determined as eligible in accordance with the policy established in this DTM will be authorized access to:

(1) Military Service exchange online activities through Defense Manpower Data Center data verification.

(2) In-store Military Service exchange facilities in the United States and U.S. territories and possessions through presentation of their DoD-issued CAC. DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees who are not issued a CAC may present locally issued proof of civilian employment in lieu of CAC for exchange access at their location of employment only.

b. Access is granted for the convenience of the DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees and is not directly linked to the employees' work assignments.

c. DoD and Coast Guard civilian employee access to Military Service exchange stores in the United States and in the U.S. territories and possessions excludes the purchase of tobacco products, alcoholic beverage products, or military uniform items.

d. Family members of DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees authorized access solely by this DTM are not authorized online or in-store access, but DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees may make purchases for themselves and their dependents.

e. Installation commanders may temporarily deny DoD and Coast Guard civilian employee privileges authorized by this DTM when installation support facilities cannot handle the burden imposed. In addition, installation commanders may temporarily or permanently deny privileges to individual authorized users who are in violation of purchase restrictions in accordance with this DTM or DoD Instruction 1330.21.

f. Military Service exchange access by DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees and their accompanying family members who are in the U.S. territories and possessions under a valid transportation agreement are no longer limited to access at the installation to which they are assigned.

g. Military Service exchange access by current Military Service exchange employees who possess a current DoD-issued CAC is no longer limited to the Military Service exchange where they are employed.

h. Installation commander approval is no longer required for Military Service exchange access by DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees and their accompanying family members who are:

(1) Evacuated from their assigned duty station during a Federally declared disaster; or

(2) Evacuated to a safe haven location in the United States from their duties in an overseas disaster area.

### 3. RETIRED DOD AND COAST GUARD CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE ACCESS TO MWR CATEGORY C ONLINE ACTIVITIES.

a. Retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees determined as eligible in accordance with the policy established in this DTM will be authorized access to MWR Category C online activities, including the Military Service exchanges, through Defense Manpower Data Center data verification.

b. Retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employee access to online Military Service exchanges excludes the purchase of tobacco products, alcoholic beverage products, or military uniform items.

c. Retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees may make MWR Category C online activity purchases for themselves and their dependents. These privileges do not extend directly to those dependents.

4. NON-DOD FEDERAL EMPLOYEES SERVING IN THE U.S. TERRITORIES AND POSSESSIONS.

a. Only the Secretaries of the Military Departments may grant deviations allowing DoD commissary and exchange access for individual non-DoD Federal employees serving in the U.S. territories and possessions, provided that all of the criteria in Paragraphs 4.a.(1) through 4.a.(3) are met and are clearly documented in a request for a waiver to policy. To implement such deviations, installation commanders may execute agreements with other U.S. Government entities.

(1) The non-DoD Federal employee is assigned under a service agreement, as defined in Subpart 302-2.13 of Title 41, Code of Federal Regulations. Locally hired employees are excluded from waiver consideration.

(2) Granting access will alleviate individual hardship due to extraordinarily difficult living conditions, excessive physical hardship, and notably unhealthful conditions.

(a) The waiver request must demonstrate how the living conditions, physical hardship, and unhealthful conditions are above and beyond what other Federal employees living in the area endure, including locally-hired Federal civilian employees.

(b) Criteria may be satisfied if the waiver request clearly demonstrates that no commercial sources are reasonably available to purchase food and water items meeting minimum Federal food safety standards. Temporary disruptions to food and water supplies due to temporary hardships or natural disasters such as hurricanes do not meet these criteria.

(c) Financial hardships, including those attributed to the local cost of living or challenges in recruiting and retaining personnel, do not meet these criteria.

(3) Granting access will fit into, and support, a web of security precautions essential to ensure the safety and security of the individual employee who is subject to current and specific individual threat conditions, such as hostile or imminent danger. To demonstrate that a web of security precautions exists, the waiver request must clearly and specifically address:

(a) How exposure to imminent danger in the local community is being limited for that individual employee, such as living in an unsecured neighborhood area; eating in restaurants; going to the movies, beaches, or other recreational activities; sending children to local school; or attending church.

(b) How shopping on the installation would materially reduce the employee's total exposure to the danger.

b. A blanket waiver request for all eligible non-DoD Federal employees of a single agency will not satisfy the requirement to demonstrate personal danger or individual hardship. Waiver requests may be considered for discrete subgroups of employees who all share the same pertinent characteristics and the supporting rationale must apply to all employees in this subgroup. Waivers will not be granted for a period of more than 2 years.

c. Privileges will not include the purchase of tobacco products, alcoholic beverage products, or uniform items.

d. Access will only be used at the assigned or designated location or locations and will be rescinded upon termination or reassignment elsewhere.

e. Access will extend to family members of the non-DoD Federal employees who reside with the employee.

f. This authority will not be delegated below the deputy assistant secretary level.

g. This section does not apply to Military Service exchange access for Coast Guard civilian employees authorized in Paragraph 2 of this attachment.

GLOSSARYPART I: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ACRONYM</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
CAC	common access card
DTM	directive-type memorandum
MWR	morale, welfare, and recreation

PART II: DEFINITIONS

These terms and their definitions are for the purpose of this issuance.

<b>TERM</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>DoD and Coast Guard civilian employee</b>	Any appropriated fund or nonappropriated fund civilian employee or civilian officer of the DoD or Coast Guard, including any DoD Presidential appointee.
<b>honorably discharged veteran</b>	Any former member of the uniformed services who separated from the uniformed service with a characterization of service of honorable or general (under honorable conditions).
<b>Military Services</b>	The U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Space Force.
<b>MWR Category C online activity</b>	Any revenue-generating MWR activity, including Military Service exchanges, that is accessible through the internet and does not require a physical visit to an installation to complete the transaction or to access the product.
<b>non-DoD Federal employee</b>	An individual employee or civilian officer of a U.S. Federal Government organization other than the DoD.
<b>retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employee</b>	Any former DoD or Coast Guard civilian employee or civilian officer who retires from DoD or the Coast Guard through time in service or due to an employment-related medical condition.
<b>uniformed services</b>	The Military Services, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps.