

Veterans with Base Access Still Face Delays on New Commissary Benefit

Having prior access to a base won't be enough to allow newly eligible veterans to shop at its commissary and exchange Jan. 1, Military.com has learned.

Beginning Jan. 1, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war, veterans with any service-connected disability will be eligible to shop at on-base facilities -- if they hold a Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). But access will be delayed for those who do not have a VHIC as military officials negotiate access to secure military facilities for what may potentially be millions of new shoppers.

And that delay applies even to those prospective customers who are able to get on base under other forms of Defense Department or Coast Guard identification, such as contractors and DoD civilian employees.

This is because there's no other way to differentiate one Department of Defense or Coast Guard credential holder from someone who is eligible to shop at commissaries, exchanges and MWR facilities, like golf courses or movie theaters, a DoD spokeswoman said via email.