

## **Disabled Veterans Allowed To Shop On Military Installations**

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Thousands of veterans have been waiting for a long time, and many begging for the right to shop on military installations. Well, the moment is finally here and veterans are thrilled.

Starting January 1, 2020, all service-connected disabled veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war (POW) and primary veteran caregivers will be eligible to shop at commissaries and base exchanges at stateside military installations.

Also, all newly eligible veterans and caregivers will be allowed to use certain morale, welfare and recreation activities.

The new installation access privilege also extends to recreation facilities on military installations. As many service-connected veterans and caregivers already know, MWR (Medical, Welfare, Recreation) facilities offer an array of services such as:

- Installation libraries
- Outdoor recreation areas (i.e., installation parks, lakes, memorials, etc.)
- Installation restaurants (i.e., Burger King, McDonald's, Popeyes, Charlie's, etc.)
- Installation golf courses
- Installation sports & fitness centers
- Installation bowling centers
- Installation arts & crafts centers

Not long ago, only veterans rated at 100% service-connected were approved to shop on military installations; now all veterans with service-connected disabilities can shop on military installations.

The issue now becomes; how does a veteran or caregiver gain access to military installations?

### How To Get On Base

Supporting officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) have decided the best, easiest, and most reliable way for service-connected veterans to get on military installations is to use some form of identification showing their service-connected status. Therefore, service-connected veterans must:

- Use their Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). Access guards at the military gate will scan cards allowing access to the installation.
- Caregivers will gain access to military installations by showing their driver's license or other forms of ID which shows their dependent status to the veteran. The VA is currently working on a caregiver-type ID card, which will have scanning swipe technology. Also, the VA and DoD may implement a policy of having caregivers submit their name and information to a frequently used or local military installation of their choice so that their name appears on an "caregiver access list."

### Using A Credit Card On The Military Installation Will Cost You

Unfortunately, service-connected veterans or caregivers who use credit cards to make purchases at commissaries will have to pay a fee for using it. To avoid such "service fees," service-connected veterans and caregivers may consider using cash or a debit card.