Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

More veterans eligible to shop, recreate at Fort Drum

Fort Drum, NY -- When Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act in December, it expanded AAFES (Army and Air Force Exchange Service), Commissary and FMWR (Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation) privileges to a larger number of veterans.

At Fort Drum, this means eligible veterans can shop at the Main Post Exchange or any of the other Exchange shops on post. They also have access to the Commissary and several FMWR facilities, to include the Pine Plains Bowling Center, Outdoor Recreation and Auto Skills Center.

The patronage change that went into effect Jan. 1 is for veterans who are Purple Heart recipients, Medal of Honor recipients, former prisoners of war or who have service-connected disabilities, as well as primary caregivers for veterans enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

Previous eligibility was limited to retirees and veterans with 100-percent disability.

As potentially more veterans may be visiting Fort Drum to shop or recreate, they should also be aware of access procedures when entering post.

Charlie Childs, Fort Drum chief of physical security, said that that whether visitors are carrying a Veterans Identification Card (VIC) or a Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC), they must first stop in the Visitor Control Center at the Lt. Gen. Paul Cerjan Gate (Main Post Gate) for initial vetting. Primary caregivers of veterans must bring the primary caregiver letter issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Childs also noted that not everyone with a VHIC has the eligibility status that grants these additional AAFES and FMWR privileges. Veterans with questions about their eligibility can visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic for more information.

“The most important thing we want people to know is that they first need to come into the Visitor Control Center for a background check,” he said. “If they pass the background check, veterans with a VIC or VHIC can receive a pass that is good for up to a year, but this does not include sponsorship privileges.”

That means veterans with passengers in their vehicle would need to go into the Visitor Control Center for the passengers to be vetted before they are issued a day pass.

For more information about gate access at Fort Drum, visit https://home.army.mil/drum/index.php/about/visitor-information or call the Visitor Control Center at (315) 772-8585 (open 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week).

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