

Planning for Holiday Sales And Holding Power

The upcoming end-of-the-year holiday season looks to be an active one in the consumables areas of Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) stores, which are already preparing for this busy time of year.

Danielle Pelland, AAFES senior buyer, Retail Food, noted that through the week of May 21 in fiscal 2018, sales of retail food items were trending up 5.1 percent, but overall seasonal sales were planned flat to the prior year.

HOLIDAY PLANNING

Pelland said that holiday planning starts in February, and selections are finalized by the end of April, with orders cut by the beginning of July.

Work on next year begins almost immediately after the end-of-year holiday period. "The seasonal desk reviews season performance within a few weeks after a season is over," she explained. "This information is used to plan out the following year."

The job of ensuring that AAFES stores are in-stock with consumables products and that customers can have confidence they will find what they are looking for is tasked to the Planning, Allocation and Replenishment (PAR) and the Forecasting teams, which Pelland said "monitor in-stocks and trends to ensure stores have the right product on the shelf for the customer."

Store personnel work with corresponding teams at headquarters to ensure that the proper amount of product is on hand even during the busiest shopping periods leading up to the holidays.

A topic of interest at a recent AAFES Main



Pelland



The holiday candy display at the Randolph Exchange, JB San Antonio, Texas, is fully stocked with seasonal choices in coordination with headquarters Planning, Allocation and Replenishment (PAR) and the Forecasting teams.

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— Danielle Pelland, AAFES Senior Buyer, Retail Food

Store Manager/General Manager (MSM/GM) conference has been troop deployments. Senior regional executives have advised store managers to maintain communications with base leadership, to follow developments in base publications and unit notices, and to stay abreast of coming deployments that may otherwise fly under the radar for OPSEC reasons.

"Store managers communicate with the buying team any long-term changes in troop strength that will affect seasons nine months out, which is a typical planning cycle length," she noted.

When it comes to some of the fastest-moving perishable consumable inventories such as chips, and other freshness-dated snacks and beverages, Pelland said, "Store managers will need to work with their local direct store delivery (DSD) supplier to determine product and quanti-

ties needed to support demand."

Pelland said that a consumables area to look upon for heightened sales for the 2018 holidays is snacks. "It is a growing area throughout the year and this trend will continue through the holidays," she said.

VOSB

On Nov. 11, Veterans Day, the Veterans online shopping benefit (VOSB) will celebrate its first official year of sales activity. Pelland said its existence has had a significant influence on ordering, pricing and AAFES's ability to keep in stock on products.

With this influence increasing in profile, AAFES has seen sales grow in the overall consumables area. "Since the launch of VOSB, consumables has had a 20-percent uptick in sales," Pelland told *E and C News*. The majority of consumables products are drop shipped and vendors have remained in stock to support this initiative." —E and C NEWS



Planning for AAFES seasonal candy sales at stores including the Fort Sam Houston Exchange, JB San Antonio, Texas, begins in February, selection is finalized by the end of April, and orders are cut by the beginning of July.