

CELEBRATING

65

YEARS OF SERVICE
1946-2011

NAVY EXCHANGE

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Navy Exchange System Celebrates Its 65th Anniversary

The Navy Exchange System will celebrate its 65th anniversary on April 1. Over the past 65 years, the NEX has worked diligently to support Sailors and their families around the world.

"The Navy Exchange System has changed over the years, but the one thing that hasn't changed is our mission to serve our military service members and their families," said Rear Adm. (Sel) Glenn Robillard, Commander, Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM). "We are part of the Navy and proudly serve alongside our service members wherever we're needed. We have been an important benefit for the past 65 years and will continue to be for many years to come."

NEXs have come a long way since the days when bumboats sold their wares to Sailors aboard Naval vessels in the 1800s. Back then, Sailors had to depend on these unreliable boats to get their personal items while aboard ship. Unfortunately, goods sold by the bumboats were typically inferior and sold at very high prices. As an alternate to bumboats, many Navy ships operated canteens so that the money spent by the crew members stayed on the boat to improve the quality of the food served by the general mess. The first canteen opened on board USS INDIANA in 1896.

By 1909, the Naval Appropriations Act established the first official resale activity, the Ships Stores and Commissary Stores. The act allowed the Navy to procure and sell merchandise to Navy and Marine Corps officer and enlisted men and to civilian employees at naval stations outside the continental United States and Alaska. In 1925, the Ships Service was created to provide Navy crew members nearly any legal article of merchandise without the profit restrictions placed on the Ships Store. However, these Ships Services had no foundation in law.

It became clear by 1942 that there was no need or space for two ships service type stores aboard Navy ships. A recommendation was made to the Chief of Naval Operations by the Supply Officer, U.S. Atlantic Fleet to merge the two stores into one official ships store operation. The recommendation was accepted and by 1944, the Secretary of the Navy

made the establishment of the merged stores mandatory on all ships that had a supply officer and permissive on all Naval activities.



Ships Service Stores ashore also began steps towards centralization in 1945 when a committee was formed to study the resale activities. The recommendation of the committee, headed by Capt. Wheelock H. Bingham, SC, USNR, was that all resale activities be operated like a large chain of retail stores and that a central office be established to oversee the operation of the Navy Resale System. The new central office for the Navy Ships Store Office was established in Brooklyn, N.Y., on Apr. 1, 1946. This office was later renamed NEXCOM and relocated to Virginia Beach, Va., in 1993.

Today, NEXCOM provides oversight for 102 NEX complexes with nearly 300 stores, as well as Navy Lodges, ship's stores and the Uniform Program Management Office. Worldwide, the Navy Exchange System employs over 14,000 associates, 27 percent of whom are military family members.