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Press Release

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Fuel ration card will replace coupons

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GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – Department of Defense-affiliated motorists in Germany will begin replacing their Army and Air Force Exchange Service fuel coupons with a new fuel ration card this summer.

Drivers will load a cash balance onto their fuel ration card, similar in appearance to a credit card, at any AAFES shoppette/gas station, post exchange, by bank allotment, online, or by phone transfer.

Once money is loaded onto the card, it can be used to pay for fuel on post or off post at Esso stations. The cardholder will present the card, along with the vehicle registration, to the cashier. Once the card is swiped, the liter-cash balance will be automatically deducted from the pre-paid balance loaded on the card.

The process is fairly simple and straightforward, said AAFES' Chris Litch, the visual merchandise manager for Grafenwoehr's Consolidated Exchange.

"The big difference – and the really important thing for people to remember – is that they're responsible for keeping track of how many liters they have on their card," said Litch.

He said if a motorist has enough liter ration remaining in the fuel ration card account for their vehicle to purchase 25 liters of fuel, and he pumps 25.01 liters off post at an Esso station, he will be required to pay the German fuel price for the full 25.01 liters. The same goes for on post overages, said Litch. If the ration balance on the card does not cover the full amount pumped, motorist will not be allowed to pay for part of the fuel in cash and part with the card.

“And you can’t go to a register (on or off post) and ask the cashier how much of a balance you have on your card,” said Litch.

Cardholders will receive a receipt each time they use the fuel ration card. Litch said motorists should take note of and remember the cash balance on the receipt.

If motorists don’t know the remaining ration balance for a vehicle that they are about to fuel, they can call the toll-free phone number shown on their fuel ration card to find out their current balance and their current prepaid cash balance.

Motorists can also track their card balances online at the AAFES Web site.

Litch said while cash balances on the fuel ration cards will roll over from month to month, the allotted monthly fuel ration – 400 liters per month for most people – will not roll over.

“The Status of Forces Agreement between the United States and Germany does not allow ration carry-over,” explained Dave Mattingly, the fuel ration card project manager for Installation Management Command-Europe. “Under the coupon system ... enforcement has been impossible.”

The ability to prevent ration rollover was one of the requirements for the German government to approve the new fuel ration card system.

Litch said there were a total of 29 scenarios that the Department of Defense, customs officials, and AAFES had to test before the German government approved the new card system.

Esso and the German government lost a lot of money due to fraud with the current fuel coupon system, said Litch.

“Everything from stolen fuel coupons to fuel being purchased by unauthorized persons,” he said, noting that fuel fraud will be much more difficult with the card system.

Although the fuel card is more restrictive than the coupon program, there are several benefits, including:

*Time Saver: No more lengthy purchase transactions for each book of coupons.

*Multiple Payment Options: Online, AAFES shoppettes and gas stations, bank allotment, and telephone transfer.

*No “Squeezing” at the Pump: No need to “squeeze” fuel to equal the exact coupon amount.

*No Signatures: No need to sign multiple coupons for each transaction.

*Safe and Secure: Lost coupons meant lost cash. Ration cards protect a driver’s investment.

*No Expired Coupons: No expired coupons at the end of the year.

Other major differences between the fuel ration card and the coupons are as follows:

*Esso stations are the only off-post facilities that accept the card. Aral is not participating in the program at this time.

*The card must match the vehicle. You cannot transfer between vehicles because the card will match the license plate and registration card. Although a card will be distributed for each registered vehicle, families can also list several drivers on a single card (in case family members swap vehicles).

*Motorists must show registration. Customers must show vehicle registration to Esso and AAFES store clerks to complete a fuel transaction.

The fuel ration card program will begin this summer and phase in to installations gradually. Fuel coupons will be valid until December 2008 or until vehicle owners activate their fuel ration card, which will be sent to motorists' units or community mail rooms.

The fuel ration card cannot be used to pay at the pump. Once drivers receive their cards, they must take them to an AAFES activation site before they are eligible for use.

Motorists are encouraged to review the FAQ section at www.imcom-europe.army.mil/sites/news/fuelcard.asp for more information.

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