

# AAFES Stationery/Home Office



## BTS Basics

### DRAW CUSTOMERS

Although the Army & Air Force Exchange Service's (AAFES) fortunes in its stationery and home office departments took a slight dip during fiscal 2009 due to the country's economic recession, the departments are ready for a comeback during fiscal 2010.

Robert Schmid, AAFES stationery buyer, reported that total sales in these departments during fiscal 2009 were \$40.6 million, a 2-percent sales dip from the nearly \$41.5 million these areas reported during the previous year.

Between the two categories, stationery amounted to about 70 percent of total sales during fiscal 2009, or about \$28.5 million, with home office reflecting about 30 percent of the total, or \$12.1 million.

#### BACK-TO-SCHOOL

The Back-to-School (BTS) period, an eight-week span during the mid-to-

late summer that encapsulates part of July, all of August, and the beginning of September, accounted for 25 percent of fiscal 2009's total sales in these two departments, or around \$10 million.

"Due to the economy, much more emphasis was placed on the basics, including school list items," Schmid said.

Thus, traditional items such as filler paper, theme books, index cards, and multi-pack stick pens were among the top-selling BTS SKUs in unit volume.

Other top sellers during the eight-week BTS period also reflect the emphasis placed on the basics, including Crayola Crayons and Colored Pencils; Number 2 pencils; pocket ports; glue sticks; composition books and writing tablets; pencil sharpeners; poster board; Sharpies; mechanical pencils; 5-in. scissors; and reamed printer paper.

In the writing area, Schmid noted that 10-pack pens, 10-pack pencils and 5-pack mechanical pencils were the



AAFES PHOTO

The Back-To-School (BTS) period accounted for 25 percent of fiscal 2009's total sales in stationery and home office departments, or around \$10 million, supported by displays and shippers such as these at Hill AFB, Utah.

leading unit producers.

#### 2010 PLANNING

Schmid pointed out that AAFES is well aware it is not the only outlet among selling these items.

"Once again, there will be a major attempt to out-promote the competition and be priced as sharp as they are," Schmid said. "We will also continue with vendor-sponsored sweepstakes" to draw customers into AAFES stores for their BTS stationery needs.

Since AAFES customers look to their local exchanges for the basics that they find on their school lists, Schmid said, "devoted seasonal space is a must as well as dedicated end caps. We have to convey the message that we're in business on the basic needs by stacking them out."

#### TRADE SHOWS

In order for buyers to stock these basics — and to be aware of the newest and most up-to-date items available in stationery — attendance at trade shows is a must.

Efficient Collaborative Retail Marketing (ECRM) holds two significant shows for the stationery and home office trade during the year. The first is the Office Supplies Show, which takes place May 11-13 at the Doral Golf Resort and Spa, Miami, Fla. The second is the School and Office Supplies Show, which is being held Sept. 12-16, 2010 at the Hilton Atlanta, Ga.

"ECRM is important to new buyers in the category and for buyers looking to make major vendor matrix changes," Schmid explained.