

No more vehicle decals - Get ready to rip that sticker off your windshield

Navy Times, June 3

Effective July 1, all bases that fall under Navy Installations Command are no longer requiring vehicle decals. The news came via a fleetwide message issued May 29. The decals, only in use stateside, have become a security threat and a liability, officials say. They've already been eliminated at Air Force and Army bases.

The Marine Corps is still hashing out its plan to do so.

With the Navy only weeks away from implementing its policy, here's what you need to know:

Why they're going away. In the U.S., post-9/11, decals present problems for base security. They are easily counterfeited, for one. Also, some sailors sell their cars to civilians and don't remove the stickers, said Ray Salamy, deputy program director for anti-terrorism at Navy Installations Command. "Decals posed a Trojan horse for us," he said. As a bonus, cutting decals will save \$750,000 annually.

Surprise vehicle checks. The real purpose of decals, installation officials said, was to ensure compliance with state requirements such as registration and insurance. So with decals gone, how will they do this? Salamy said bases will rely on random checks, similar to drunken driving checkpoints. Command authorized inspections such as these are not new, but you may see more of them with decals eliminated.

What do you do on July 1? The Navy recommends sailors remove decals on this day to reduce the chances your vehicle will be targeted by a criminal or terrorist attack. The identifying decals aren't supposed to be used to determine gate entry, so removing them should not result in longer waits at the gate, Salamy said. The military has required 100 percent ID-card checks since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and the decal is not a substitute. If in practice, your sentries are waving lots of cars through the gate based on decals, that's a violation of policy and may be worth reporting, Salamy said, as it's a compromise of security.

Officer salutes. Commissioned officers will continue to be saluted under the new policy. Once an ID card is checked, a sentry will "render the proper salute, assuming traffic conditions and force protection conditions permit," installation officials state on a list of frequently asked questions. You can read them at www.cnic.navy.mil. You are also able to submit your own questions.

More changes. By July, the Navy expects to go operational with several automatic gates installed at Northwest Navy installations, Salamy said. The new gates are not intended to eliminate sentries, but will be a "low-man concept." They should free those sentries still on-site to focus on other things than ID cards, Salamy said. For example, scrutinizing passengers or vehicle contents.