

Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) and Payment for Government-Provided Meals.

Prior to the legislative reform of BAS under title 37 U.S. Code §402, enlisted members were subsisted "in-kind" - meaning they were furnished meals (rations) at a dining facility at no charge and if Rations-in-Kind (RIK) were not provided or available, a subsistence allowance was paid to them. In other words, prior to BAS reform, enlisted members were normally provided meals without charge by their unit dining facility/galley as part of their basic compensation plan. In certain cases, commanding officers could authorize a number of enlisted personnel to "mess separately" and receive a cash allowance (Separate Rations – SEPRATS) in lieu of RIK. At duty stations that did not have an appropriated fund dining facility, enlisted personnel were authorized a monthly subsistence allowance called Regular BAS (REG-BAS). Members in receipt of SEPRATS or REG-BAS had to pay for any government-provided meals they consumed. Officers then and now are not authorized RIK but have always been entitled to BAS and have always had to pay for the government-furnished meals they consumed.

In 2000 Congress amended title 37 U.S. Code §402 so that all service members (officers & enlisted personnel that have completed Basic Training) that are entitled to Basic Pay are concurrently entitled to BAS, including reservists on active duty for training. Also, Federal law (title 37 U.S. Code §1011), requires that any Uniformed Service member in receipt of any subsistence allowance or meal per diem must pay for government-provided meals from an appropriated fund dining facility according to prices established by the Secretary concerned (in the Coast Guard's case, our galleys charge prices set under the authority of the Secretary of DHS). Since the Service must collect payment for meals provided by Coast Guard galleys, it is the Service's option as to how meal charges are collected. In most shore-based galleys, charges for meals are collected at the door or, if authorized, accumulated under an Individual Credit Accounts (ICA) which must be paid in-full to the unit Food Service Officer each month. Because they are not authorized BAS, cadets, non-prior service officer candidates, and enlisted recruits undergoing Basic Training are the only members authorized to be provided meals by Coast Guard dining facilities or galleys without charge to the patron. In certain assignments, such as sea duty aboard cutters with established galleys or at Coast Guard Class A Schools, use of the cutter or training center galley is deemed mandatory and payment for meals is accomplished by an automatic daily meal rate deduction directly from enlisted members' pay accounts. For members subject to automatic pay account deductions for meals, meal charges are refunded to these members for days when they are placed on leave or on temporary duty away from their units. It is an unfortunate, but common, misconception that enlisted members lose their BAS when assigned to sea duty or Class A Schools. As previously stated, all enlisted members entitled to Basic Pay are, after completion of Basic Training, entitled to BAS. This can be verified by checking one's pay/allowance credits on their Statements of Semi-Monthly Income – all active duty officers and post-Basic Training enlisted personnel receive their full monthly BAS along with their Basic Pay. In cases where enlisted members are assigned to sea duty (with established galleys) or Class A School, a deduction should be posted on their Statements of Semi-Monthly Income showing deductions for payment of meals while at their units (posted under Deductions as "Discount Meal RA"). Unit Servicing Personnel Offices (SPOs) are responsible for starting and stopping automatic meal charge deductions, but as in all pay matters, it is ultimately individual member's responsibility to verify the correctness of their pay accounts, including payment for meals provided by the Coast Guard.

In short, the forgoing can be described by two simple rules:

Rule 1: Everyone who gets Basic Pay gets BAS.

Rule2: If you consume a government-provided meal, you must pay for it.