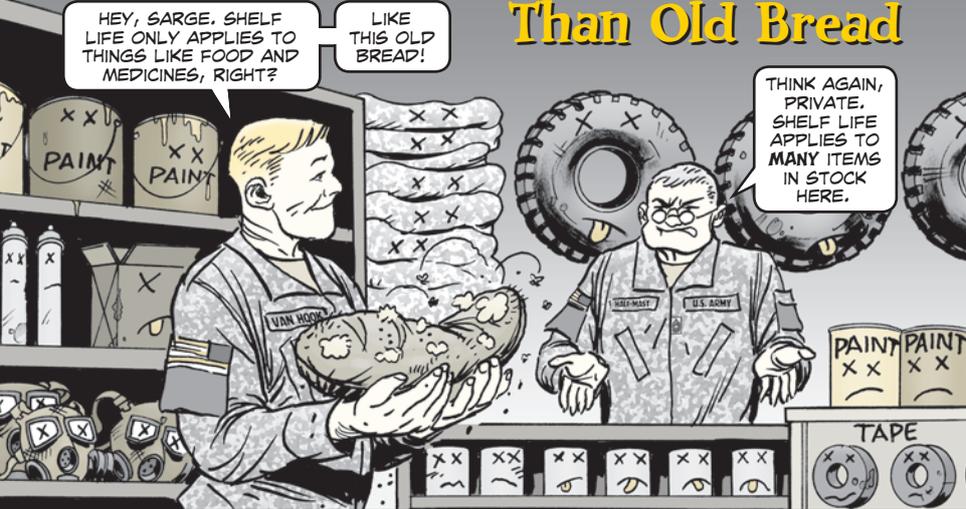


Shelf Life: It's About More Than Old Bread



Most of us know something about shelf life. At home or the grocery store, we check expiration dates on bread or milk to be sure the product's still good.

But sometimes, the difference between shelf life and service life causes confusion in Army supply circles. Every supply item has a useful life expectancy, but shelf life and service life are two different stages in an item's life.

Shelf Life

Shelf life for a product begins on the date of manufacture and lasts until its packaging is opened or the product expires. Some examples of shelf-life items include:

- food
- medicines
- batteries
- paints
- sealants
- adhesives
- film
- tires
- chemicals
- packaged petroleum products
- hoses/belts
- mission-critical O-rings
- CBRN equipment and clothing

Shelf-life codes tell you the date by which you must use, inspect/test/restore or dispose of items. You'll find codes and policies in Appendix E of DOD 4140.27-M, *Shelf-Life Management Manual*. View or download it here:

https://www.shelflife.hq.dla.mil/policy_DoD4140_27.aspx

There are two types of shelf-life supplies. Type I items have defined, non-extendible shelf lives. Their usefulness ends on their expiration date. Type II items have assigned shelf-life periods that may be extended after inspections, tests, or restoration.

Service Life

Shelf life ends and service life begins when packaging is opened and an item enters use. This transition also occurs when a shelf-life item is installed, placed in a bin or held as bench stock.

Service life is a general term for the average or standard life expectancy of an item when it's in use. More testing and inspection are needed once an item enters its service life. You'll find the service life testing and inspection requirements for some items in their technical manuals.

However, many consumable Type I (non-reparable) items do not have specific service lives. If there is any doubt about the safety or serviceability of an item, dispose of it properly.

EFFECTIVE SHELF LIFE AND SERVICE LIFE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES...



- Requisition/procure items in smaller quantities and units of issue. Use Supply Support Requests when necessary.
- Reduce inventory stockage levels.
- Requisition items just-in-time.
- Practice stock rotation, i.e. first-in, first-out (FIFO).
- Maintain required prescribed storage conditions, particularly for shelf life items which are hazardous materials.
- Extend Type II shelf life items by:
 - using test results from the Shelf Life Extension System (SLES).
 - testing samples when cost effective, or
 - accomplishing authorized visual inspections or restoration procedures.
- Label extended Type II items using DD Form 2477 series labels, available from the DoD Shelflife website.
- Prepare Supply Discrepancy Reports (SDR) when issued outdated shelf life items.
- Submit shelf life code challenges to the DoD Shelflife website when experience indicates a change is needed.
- Process outdated items promptly for disposal.
- Obtain shelf-life training at the DoD Shelflife website.
- Follow tech pub guidance when managing service life.

For more information, visit DOD's shelf-life website:

<https://www.shelflife.hq.dla.mil/>

For assistance, contact the Army shelf-life POC at DSN 795-7685, (570) 615-7685, or email:

sles.army@dla.mil

Go to our blog at <http://halfmastpsmag.wordpress.com> to see ways to extend shelf life for Type II items.