

NEWS RELEASE



VACATION SEASON BEGINS HIGH RISK PERIOD FOR SPREAD OF EMERALD ASH BORER

Deadly invasive insect has been discovered in 15 states and poses a threat to many others

ARLINGTON, VA - May 23rd, 2012. As Memorial Day kicks off the vacation and camping season, another summer event takes place: adult emerald ash borers emerge from ash trees to mate and lay eggs. These invasive tree-killing beetles can spread when moved to new locations in contaminated firewood by vacationing Americans. Often described as one of the most destructive insects to ever invade this country, the emerald ash borer has killed tens of millions of ash trees in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic states, and is a threat to all ash trees nationwide.

The emerald ash borer is originally from Asia and most likely first arrived in North America in infested wood packaging crates and pallets. Because it's a non-native species, American and Canadian trees have no evolved resistance to its attacks, and it has no effective native predators. The beetle was first discovered in the United States in 2002 in southeastern Michigan. Since that time, EAB infestations have been detected in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the Canadian provinces, Ontario and Quebec.

The beetles usually emerge in late May and early June, making early summer the most critical time for everyone to be aware of what the emerald ash borer looks like. Once the emerald ash borer has infested a tree, the larvae carve shallow tunnels under the bark, disrupting the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients. These tunnels, called galleries, are what eventually kill the tree.

"Because the emerald ash borer larvae feed under the surface of the bark, a visual inspection will often not detect them," said Leigh Greenwood, *Don't Move Firewood* campaign manager, The Nature Conservancy. "When people take firewood with them on their camping and hiking vacations, they can unknowingly transport these or other damaging pests. It might seem harmless to pack a few pieces of seasoned firewood along with your gear, but it's not. We ask people to leave their firewood at home. Buy firewood where you'll burn it."

The emerald ash borer, Asian longhorned beetle, and many other invasive insects' spread is aided by the movement of firewood. Firewood is implicated in dozens of forest pest

infestations found in or near campgrounds, including infestations in Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, and West Virginia.

“There are an estimated eight billion ash trees of various species in the United States, found in almost every state, all of which are vulnerable because of the spread of the emerald ash borer,” said Faith Campbell, senior policy representative at the Conservancy. “At a policy level, we need stronger regulations in place to help prevent the entry of these types of destructive pests into the country; however, once they are here, regulations and voluntary actions intended to curtail human movement of the pests is one of our greatest hopes for slowing the spread.”

Many states have quarantines on the movement of firewood, with rules varying greatly according to local jurisdictions and pest situations. In many states, regulations limit how far firewood can be legally transported and some states prohibit the entrance of out-of-state firewood altogether. Additionally, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has federal quarantines in affected states to prevent the movement of pests like the Asian longhorned beetle, emerald ash borer, sudden oak death, and other damaging pests and pathogens.

“The state and federal quarantines are in place to help protect our country’s natural resources from invasive species like the Emerald Ash Borer,” said APHIS spokesperson Joelle Hayden. “As we move into the summer travel season, we encourage everyone to take basic steps like not moving firewood and following the quarantines to help keep this pest from spreading unintentionally.”

Following are tips from the *Don’t Move Firewood* campaign:

- If you don’t want to keep your firewood until next winter, don’t be tempted to take it along on any road trips. Instead, you can give it to your next-door neighbor, burn or chip it on site, or dispose of it locally.
- Keep in mind that even though the wood may look clean and healthy, it could still harbor tiny insect eggs or microscopic fungal spores that could start a new and deadly infestation of forest pests.
- Obtain firewood near the location where you will burn it – that means the wood was cut in a nearby forest, in the same county, or a maximum of 25-50 miles from where you'll have your fire depending on state regulations.
- Aged or seasoned wood is not considered safe to move, but labeled and commercially kiln-dried wood is a good option if you must transport firewood.
- If you have already moved firewood, and you need to dispose of it safely, burn it soon and completely. Make sure to rake the storage area carefully and also burn the debris. In the future, buy from a local source.
- Take care to respect all state and local regulations on the movement of firewood and other unprocessed wood – some areas are subject to serious fines for violations. For

more information, visit <http://www.dontmovefirewood.org/the-problem/state-state-information/index.html>.

- For more information about federal quarantines in the states where the emerald ash borer has been found, please go to: <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/>.
- If you notice an insect or tree disease you don't recognize, take a photo or obtain a specimen of it, and compare it to Web site photos of the suspected pest. A good resource to help in identification is: <http://www.dontmovefirewood.org/gallery-of-pests>.
- If you believe you have found a new outbreak of an invasive insect or disease, contact your state department of agriculture: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/other/stateag.html>.
- Tell your friends and others about the risks of moving firewood – no one wants to be responsible for starting a new pest infestation.

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To learn more about *Don't Move Firewood*, visit <http://www.DontMoveFirewood.org>

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at www.nature.org.