

NEWS RELEASE



STOCKING UP ON WOOD FOR WINTER CAN KILL TREES

Buy firewood from local sources to avoid transporting invasive insects and diseases

ARLINGTON, VA – December 15th, 2010. As winter arrives, people across the country are engaging in a centuries-old tradition of buying or gathering firewood to fuel home fires. In a recent poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy, one in twenty Americans said they moved firewood long distances (i.e., more than 50 miles, a distance widely accepted as moving it “too far”).

Moving firewood can increase the risk of new invasive pest infestations that kill trees. To prevent the spread of these pests, the Don't Move Firewood campaign recommends buying firewood that was cut locally, preferably within the same county or region of where it will be burned.

Transporting firewood can potentially create new infestations of invasive insects and diseases, which can lurk in firewood at any time of the year. These tree-killing pests cannot move far on their own, but when people move firewood that harbors them, they unwittingly enable these pests to start an infestation far from their current range. Past invaders have devastated native species of trees such as the American chestnut, hemlock, and American elm- tree species which have been part of American forests and city streets for centuries prior to invasion of foreign pests.

“These new poll results tell us that when people learn why they shouldn't transport firewood long distances, the vast majority are willing to buy it where they burn it,” said Leigh Greenwood, Don't Move Firewood campaign manager, The Nature Conservancy. “People have the power to save their trees. They can help stop the spread of destructive pests by not moving firewood and communicating this message to others.”

The poll results indicate that only 34 percent of the respondents who use firewood have heard that they should not move firewood long distances; however, once they are aware of the problem, 80 percent would be willing to buy the wood in the area where they plan to burn it. In regions of the country hardest hit by invasive pests, the number of people who have heard the message to not move firewood has increased from 38 percent in 2007, when the poll was previously conducted, to 59 percent in this year's poll results. In these same regions, from 2007

to 2010 the poll indicates there has been a 13 percent increase in the number of people that say they never move firewood.

In Worcester, MA, more than 28,000 trees have been removed due to the invasion of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), turning Worcester's once canopied streets into stark naked roadways. Experts think a small ALB infestation discovered and controlled this past summer in Boston may have been from beetles that escaped out of Worcester, potentially on firewood or brush.

"Burning a wood fire in the winter has a lot of different uses – a primary heat source, a place for a family gathering, or part of a romantic evening by the fire," said Greenwood. "When firewood comes from a well managed local forest, it's a great alternative to using fossil fuels like oil and natural gas. We just ask that when using firewood for these purposes, people help protect their local trees by not risking the accidental movement of insects and diseases that can wipe out entire forests."

Following are tips from the Don't Move Firewood campaign:

- 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 at a maximum of 50 miles from where you'll have your fire.
- Don't be tempted to get firewood from a remote location just because the wood looks clean and healthy. It could still harbor tiny insect eggs or microscopic fungal spores that will start a new and deadly infestation of forest pests.
- Aged or seasoned wood is not considered safe to move, but commercially kiln-dried wood is a good option if you must transport firewood.
- If you have already moved firewood, and you now know 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.
- 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.