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NEWS

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Transporting Firewood Can Spread Tree-Killing Insects

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — Firewood is on the minds of many Coloradans around Labor Day weekend, with some stocking up on cords for winter fuel while others plan on procuring a few armloads for hunting trips. But because of the considerable impact emerald ash borer (EAB), native bark beetles and other insects can have on Colorado forests, the Colorado State Forest Service wants to be sure people are aware of the risks associated with transporting firewood.

“There are serious risks associated with moving firewood, from further spreading native insects like spruce beetle to introducing exotic tree pests into our community forests,” said Keith Wood, CSFS community forestry program manager.

The transportation of firewood is a common cause for the accidental introduction of harmful tree insects and diseases to new areas. EAB, an invasive insect responsible for the death of millions of ash trees in 24 states and Canada, was detected in Colorado for the first time last fall. The insect’s arrival in the state, for now confirmed only in the City of Boulder, was most likely due to the human movement of raw ash wood. A quarantine is now in place in Boulder County and two small neighboring areas to try and prevent the human-assisted spread of EAB, because an estimated 15 percent or more of Colorado’s urban trees are ash.

Insects and diseases harmful to our native and urban forests, often hidden away under the bark, can hitch a ride on cut wood from both living and dead trees. Wood says besides EAB, pests of primary concern related to moving firewood include the gypsy moth and Asian longhorned beetle, which have not yet had a significant impact in Colorado, and thousand cankers disease, which has killed most of the black walnut trees in some urban Front Range communities and was recently detected in northeast Colorado.

The CSFS offers several tips to help protect trees and forests:

- Burn firewood at the location where you buy or cut it. Leave behind any wood you don’t burn.
- Don’t transport potentially infested or diseased wood across state or county lines. If you have questions about whether wood might contain insects or diseases of concern, contact a local CSFS office for information.
- Never transport any regulated wood materials out of a quarantine area (in some cases, such as with the EAB quarantine in Colorado, this is illegal).
- Ask firewood dealers questions about the origin of the logs, and always try to buy local. The best option is anything labeled with the [Colorado Forest Products](#) logo.

- If buying firewood that has been declared free of pest concerns, be sure it has been debarked or is thoroughly dried or “cured” before transporting locally.
- Learn to identify the symptoms of common pests in the type of wood you plan to burn.

For more information about insects and diseases that threaten Colorado trees, contact a local CSFS district office or go to <http://csfs.colostate.edu>. For more about the risks of moving firewood, go to www.dontmovefirewood.org.

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