



Don't Let Pests and Diseases Hitch a Ride on Firewood

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Contact: Donna Gilson, Communication Specialist
(608) 224-5130, donna.gilson@wi.gov

MADISON – Camping and cabin season kicks off with the Memorial Day weekend, and plant health authorities are reminding you that hauling firewood from home could launch an infestation of emerald ash borer, gypsy moth or other destructive pests and diseases.

"Buy it where you burn it' is always good advice," says Brian Kuhn, director of the Plant Industry Bureau in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). "But you can also buy firewood certified by DATCP, and that's safe to take anywhere in the state. It's available at many convenience stores, state parks, and some large retail and home centers."

Kuhn notes that state parks require that firewood be brought from no more than 10 miles away. National forests require it to be purchased within 25 miles. Many private campgrounds prohibit bringing in firewood at all. It is actually illegal to take firewood from a county quarantined for gypsy moth to a non-quarantined county. The only exception to these regulations is using certified firewood, which has been aged or treated to kill pests and diseases.

While the entire state of Wisconsin is now quarantined for emerald ash borer, there are still large areas where EAB has not been found. Slowing the spread of EAB to these areas can give communities and property owners time to prepare, by treating high-value trees or planting other species, and spreading out costs over time. But it's not only EAB and gypsy moth that threaten Wisconsin's forests. Oak wilt and other pests and diseases can also be spread on firewood.

"You can't just look at wood and see pests and diseases," Kuhn says. "They may be under the bark or burrowed into the wood, or they may be microscopic pathogens. In the balance of things, the health of our forests – and all the jobs and wildlife that depend on it – is worth spending a few dollars to buy firewood instead of hauling it from home."

For more information, visit datcp.wi.gov and search for "firewood".

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