

## Sample Press Release

*No graphics are provided for this story. You may want to use photos of trees from your community.*

### **Don't Move Firewood – Help Stop the Spread of Emerald Ash Borer**

When a tree dies in the backyard, many homeowners turn it into firewood and take it up to their cottage or give it to a neighbor. Unfortunately, they may also be giving hidden hitchhikers a ride. Alien tree pests and diseases such as emerald ash borer (EAB), gypsy moth and oak wilt are easily transported long distances on firewood. EAB hitchhiked from Asia to Michigan in cargo packing materials and has since killed over 20 million ash trees. Now an estimated 717 million ash trees in Wisconsin are threatened by this pest hitchhiking its way on firewood from an infested state (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio). Public care in using firewood is the most effective way to minimize the spread of EAB.

Firewood cut from trees in urban areas is among the most risky for having hidden hitchhikers. The gypsy moth is well established in eastern and central Wisconsin, and its egg masses are often laid on outdoor articles such as firewood piles. Urban areas are at high risk for introduction of EAB, and even though the pest hasn't yet been found in Wisconsin, it may already be here. Someone could be moving a pest that we don't even know we have!

Homeowners can help keep Wisconsin's urban forests healthy by taking a few precautions:

- Leave your firewood at home and obtain it near your cottage or campsite. Local wood is at low risk of introducing a new pest or disease.
- Don't bring firewood home, especially if you've been out-of-state. In fact, it is now against the law to take firewood of hardwood trees (including ash) out of Illinois, Indiana, lower Michigan and Ohio because of the risk of transporting EAB. Even if an area is currently not known to have EAB, it may actually be there undetected.
- Wood that has loose bark is safer because most insects and diseases that live beneath the bark need it to be tightly attached to the wood. Check each piece though, because gypsy moth egg masses may still be hiding under loose bark.
- Burn all of the firewood that you obtain. Don't bring it home!

Wisconsin residents can also help by monitoring their ash trees. If three or more of the following symptoms are observed on any species of ash tree (except mountainash, which is not a true ash tree), it should be reported immediately to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection by calling 1-800-462-2803:

- dying branches in the tree canopy
- sprouting on the trunk or at the base of the tree
- splitting bark on the trunk
- increased woodpecker activity
- tiny, D-shaped holes where adult beetles have emerged
- S-shaped trails underneath the bark
- small, bullet-shaped, metallic green beetles present from June to August

For more information on emerald ash borer, visit <http://emeraldashborer.wi.gov/>.

*[Note to Editors: Responsibility for public trees varies from city to city. The most complete information about the tree resource in your community, such as which are publicly owned and what the city's responsibilities are, can be obtained from your city forester or other appropriate city agency.]*

Last revised 1/30/2007