



NEWS RELEASE

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Toast marshmallows, but leave your firewood home

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As campers, you might have heard recently about how moving firewood long distance serves to rapidly speed up the spread of exotic invasive insects and pathogens.

Invasive pests typically spread on their own only a short distance each year. Someone moving infested firewood in a vehicle, though, might spread forest-harming pests *hundreds of miles in a single day*.

To reduce the risk of invasive pests harming our beautiful native woodlands, including those near campgrounds, officials are discouraging campers from moving firewood more than a few miles from home to camp, and visa versa. Instead, they recommend people either buy or gather wood locally, then burn it completely.

"There is a great potential to spread many pests through the movement of firewood," said Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation Forest Health Program Leader Charlie Burnham. "Our firewood motto is 'Buy locally, burn locally.'"

Another important reason for leaving firewood at home these days is to avoid potential fines and legal problems. Problems can arise when people move firewood from one state to another, passing through a state with strict firewood regulations in place.

As regulated pests such as the emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle spread into new areas, more states are issuing restrictions prohibiting the movement of firewood within and around their borders. Every affected state has its own set of regulations and these can vary widely from state to state. A good place to check on line for firewood regulations in EAB-infested states is in the Midwest and mid-Atlantic is www.goodcamper.info. Though, not listed on the Web site, New York, a gateway state for the Northeast, also recently imposed restrictions on firewood movement within its borders.

When it comes to reducing the human-caused spread of invasive insects, limiting firewood movement is the key. If there is firewood available for use at the campground, by all means use it. If not, consider buying firewood from a *local* firewood supplier. Even if the locally-supplied firewood becomes infested, it will only have moved a few miles, not several hundred.

Firewood itself is not the problem. Instead, it's the potentially harmful insects and pathogens often lying hidden underneath the bark, sometimes deep in the wood, that are the real concern. Most firewood infestations go undetected to the untrained eye. Firewood in this case simply serves as an accidental conveyance for moving forest-harming bugs.

The crux of the issue then is not about burning wood or making campfires; it's about moving tree-damaging insects and pathogens long distance and the potential harm that does to our forests. So please, go on making campfires like always, sing songs and tell scary stories around the fire. By all means have a yummy, sticky campfire-roasted marshmallow. In fact, have two while you're at it; they're small.

Just keep the firewood local. By doing that, you're helping to reduce the spread of invasive insects and pathogens and keep our forests scenic and healthy for generations to come.

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