

NH to impose strict firewood quarantine

CONCORD, N.H. —The State of New Hampshire will implement a quarantine of out-of-state firewood starting July 18 to control the spread of invasive forest pests.

“Invasive pests of trees are often spread through the transportation of firewood, which can be infested with insects, even if there is no visible evidence” said New Hampshire State Entomologist Piera Siegert. “We’re trying to reduce the risk to our native trees by initiating a quarantine of firewood.”

New Hampshire Forest Entomologist Kyle Lombard agreed.

“It’s surprising how much and how far people are willing to transport firewood. We surveyed firewood use at campgrounds and found that 40 percent of the out-of state campers brought it from home. Many of those folks were from as far away as Florida, North Carolina, and California. We have seen that every stick of firewood taken from these campers had insects, to the tune of about 30 per piece.”

A joint state-federal regulation implemented two years ago restricted firewood movement on state reservation lands and national forest lands within New Hampshire, including their respective campgrounds.

The new quarantine expands upon these earlier restrictions to prohibit out-of-state firewood movement to all lands in New Hampshire. Under the new regulations, only approved heat-treated firewood or firewood transported with a compliance agreement may enter New Hampshire.

“Treated firewood,” or firewood certified to have been heated to 160 degrees Fahrenheit (71 degrees Celsius) for 75 minutes, is exempt from the exterior firewood quarantine. This is because the treatment kills the insects and diseases within the wood. All treated firewood must be properly packaged and clearly labeled.

The quarantine will also allow commercial firewood producers and residents to apply for a firewood compliance agreement. The compliance agreement would only be to transport one cord or more of firewood from selected counties in neighboring states. The pre-approved counties are subject to change should there be a discovery of an insect or disease of concern within the county.

The following counties are pre-approved:

Maine: Franklin, Oxford, Androscoggin, Cumberland, York

Vermont: All counties

Massachusetts: Essex, Middlesex, Franklin

A copy of the FCA must accompany any firewood shipped to New Hampshire.

The FCA will be an agreement between the applicant and the N.H. Department of Resources and Economic Development or the N.H. Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food. The process will be different for commercial producers of firewood and for residents. Residents wishing to transport one cord of firewood or more, for home heating purposes only, may use the abbreviated compliance agreement available on-line at www.nhdf.org.

Violators of the quarantine are subject to confiscation of their firewood and a fine.

“The health of our trees and forests are linked to the health of our state; socially, economically, and environmentally,” said New Hampshire State Forester Brad Simpkins. “We must all share the responsibility to protect this wonderful resource for ours and future generations.”

“It is our sincere hope that people will want to do the right thing and enforcement actions will be few and far between. However, we stand ready to take legal action when necessary; too much is at risk.”

Many harmful exotic invasive forest pests have gained entry into North American forests during the past 20 years through people moving goods and plant material, including firewood. Two major forest pests include the Asian longhorned beetle and emerald ash borer, neither of which is known to occur in New Hampshire.

The ALB has no known natural control and has spread to four northern states due to human activities. The beetle infests a wide variety of hardwood trees and threatens local forests and industries. In 2008 an established ALB infestation was detected in Worcester, Mass.

The EAB has killed an estimated 25 million ash trees across 15 states and two Canadian provinces so far. It was first detected in the Detroit area in 2002. About 75 percent of known EAB infestations have been attributed to camp firewood.

More than half of all forests in New Hampshire are composed of susceptible host trees for ALB and EAB.

Executive Director at New Hampshire Campground Owners’ Association Gregg Pitman said he sees this as an opportunity to educate campers and enlist public support.

“Campers are part of the solution to this. They need to take responsibility to stop the spread of invasive pests, especially if they love camping in New Hampshire. It’s not about selling firewood. It’s about protecting our forests.”

On the Net: www.nhdf.org/forest-health/firewood/

www.agriculture.nh.gov/divisions/plant_industry/firewood-quarantine.htm