

Emerald Ash Borer Discovered in Gilmanton

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Quarantine expands; public information meeting July 21 in Laconia

GILMANTON, N.H. – A highly destructive forest pest, the emerald ash borer (EAB), has made its way to Gilmanton. Though it only infests trees in the olive (Oleaceae) family and is highly specific to ash trees, it's considered the most destructive forest pest in North America. Unless preventative steps are taken, EAB kills infested ash trees within three to five years.

A public meeting about EAB and the quarantine takes place July 21 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. in conference room 1 (the multipurpose room) of the Belknap County Complex, 34 County Drive, Laconia.

At the meeting, representatives from the N.H. Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food and the N.H. Dept. of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Forests and Lands, will describe the EAB's threat, state efforts, and the purpose and provisions of the quarantine.

Citizens, homeowners who have ash trees on their properties, community leaders, members of the forestry and "green" industries, and those concerned about the health of New Hampshire's trees and forests are encouraged to attend.

EAB was first detected in New Hampshire in the spring of 2013 when an infested tree was identified in Concord. Since that initial detection, it's spread to more than 10 New Hampshire towns. Connecticut and Massachusetts are two other New England states with infestations.

EAB is spread by people moving nursery stock and untreated wood products, especially firewood. New finds of EAB result in a county-wide quarantine to reduce the transportation of the beetle while facilitating trade in "safe" ash products.

The detection of EAB in Gilmanton makes Belknap County the newest county included in the already-existing quarantine in Hillsborough, Merrimack, and Rockingham counties. The new boundaries of the quarantine go into effect July 13. The penalty provisions of the quarantine go into effect following the public meeting on July 21.

Piera Siegert, state entomologist with the Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food, says, "The detection of EAB in Gilmanton isn't a surprise given its proximity to the Canterbury and Loudon infestations. We found EAB adults in Belknap County using a new trap deployed in New Hampshire for the first time this year as part of the national EAB survey program. We are just beginning our trapping season, and more infested sites may be found in the future."

Brad Simpkins, state forester with the N.H. Dept. of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Forests and Lands, says, "We added Belknap County to the quarantine area to reduce transportation of potentially infested materials, like firewood, chips, and logs, into other parts of New Hampshire. The overall goal of the emerald ash borer program is management of the ash resource, not necessarily management of the beetle. Early detection enables those municipalities, landowners, and residents of Belknap County with an interest in preserving their ash the time to implement their ash management strategies."

"New Hampshire residents are an important part of the response effort," adds Karen Bennett, forestry specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension. "Homeowners need to stay informed about emerald ash borer, implement response plans as appropriate, make a commitment to not transport firewood out of the quarantine area, and follow best management practices in areas with active emerald ash borer populations."

Andy Fast, UNH Cooperative Extension's Belknap County forester, advises homeowners and woodlot owners to be aware of woodpecker activity around ash trees. "Woodpeckers will strip away the outer bark, leaving the trunk with a 'blonded' appearance. EAB can be a fast-spreading insect. The best homeowners can do is locate infested trees, treat or remove them, and try to slow down the spread of this invasive insect."