

Leave Your Firewood at Home This Camping Season—Buy Locally

May 29, 2015

Forest Rangers Confiscate Firewood in Twin Mountain

DURHAM, N.H. – People move emerald ash borer and other damaging insects far greater distances than the insects move on their own. One common means of movement is in firewood.

“Emerald ash borer is found in three counties in southern New Hampshire: Rockingham, Hillsborough, and Merrimack,” said Karen Bennett, UNH Cooperative Extension forestry specialist. “Each of these counties is under quarantine to prevent the movement of emerald ash borer by transporting ash products, including hardwood firewood.”

There is also a quarantine on out-of-state firewood. Quarantines are one method to reduce the spread of harmful invasive pests.

This past Memorial Day weekend, Forest Rangers from the N.H. Division of Forests and Lands set up an inspection area on Route 3 in Twin Mountain. During the seven-hour shift on Friday, May 22, they confiscated firewood from 42 individuals and collected the most confiscated wood in three years of Memorial Day weekend inspections.

Firewood was confiscated from individuals traveling from both out-of-state and the three New Hampshire counties within the emerald ash borer quarantine. Most of the confiscated firewood came from in-state: 38 of the 42 loads of confiscated firewood originated in Rockingham, Hillsborough, and Merrimack counties.

Captain John Accardi from the N.H. Division of Forests and Lands made the point that the inspection area closed at 7:30 p.m. and there was still a lot of traffic. It’s possible that more out-of-state firewood would have been confiscated if the inspections were continued later into the evening.

During the inspection, vehicles were instructed by traffic signs to pull over if they were carrying firewood. Captain Accardi described the event saying, “Most of the time, firewood isn’t visible. We can’t stop people if we don’t know they have firewood. We rely on them to be honest and pull over.”

He added public participation is critical, and the emphasis of these events is on protecting resources and providing information. “We don’t want to create an environment where people sneak firewood past inspection areas, so we aren’t too heavy-handed. We confiscate their wood and give them a warning. We try not to write tickets in most cases; we want these events to be educational for campers coming to the North Country. In time most people will hear about the issue and leave firewood at their homes in favor of finding local sources.”

Piera Siegert, state entomologist with the N.H. Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, added, “Transportation of firewood puts our forest resource at risk, especially when quarantines are in place to reduce the spread of devastating forest pests. This enforcement event highlights the active role that New Hampshire residents and out-of-state visitors can play in protecting the forests that we love—a part of the wild and scenic nature of New Hampshire.”

“The goal of the inspections is to prevent the spread of invasive insects, such as emerald ash borer,” said Kyle Lombard, N.H. Division of Forests and Lands forest entomologist. “We encourage people to buy their firewood locally where they will burn it.”

The wood confiscated during the event was taken to a certified treatment facility in Lancaster and destroyed.

Learn more about emerald ash borer and the in-state and out-of-state quarantines at www.NHBugs.org.