

Firewood Treatment and Labeling

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Background and Status

Firewood movement is a high-risk pathway for moving forest pests. When trees die, they are often cut up for firewood. Though much firewood is burned locally, some is shipped to distant markets. Forest pests such as emerald ash borer (EAB), Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), and thousand canker disease (TCD) can hitchhike on the firewood and invade new areas.

USDA completed a Risk Assessment of the Movement of Firewood within the United States in May 2010 [Plant Epidemiology and Risk Analysis Laboratory, CPHST, PPQ, APHIS, USDA, 1730 Varsity Dr., Suite 300, Raleigh NC, 27606]. This assessment concluded that firewood movement is a high-risk pathway for moving forest pests. It also recommended that Federal and State regulatory agencies coordinate efforts to mitigate potential risks.

USDA also convened a Firewood Taskforce to review this issue and make recommendations: <http://www.nd.gov/ndda/files/resource/NationalFirewoodTaskForceRecommendations.pdf>. The Taskforce recommended a combination of outreach, voluntary, and regulatory strategies to reduce the risk of spread of non-native species via firewood.

The NPB recognizes that burning firewood is a necessary heat source for some people and a favorite pastime for millions more. We believe that these uses can continue without putting forests and urban landscapes at risk if standards for firewood treatment and labeling are adopted across the country.

National Plant Board Policy and Directives

The National Plant Board fully supports initiatives that protect trees in native forests and urban landscapes. NPB supports efforts to foster harmonized firewood treatment standards and promote education of the firewood-using public.

Specifically the NPB supports:

- Standardized labeling requirements for commercial firewood, e.g. “Approved Pest-Free”
- Incentives to encourage use of local firewood. Specifically NPB opposes regulations that encourage consumers to prefer imported, i.e. non-local, firewood.
- Continued outreach and education with consistent messages such as “Buy It Where You Burn It.” Encourage buying of heat-treated commercial firewood, and raise awareness among the public of the risks of moving untreated firewood.
- Heat treatment for all firewood imported to the U.S. to the minimum 60°C for 60 minutes standard.

The National Plant Board further supports industry efforts to develop an industry-run national certification program with adequate oversight including consistent best management practices, standards for heat treatment, and labeling for commercial firewood producers and distributors.