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NEWS

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Transporting Firewood Dangerous for Colorado Forests

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — With fall fast approaching, firewood is on the minds of many Coloradans. Some will seek out a cord or two for winter heating, while others will load split wood into SUVs for Labor Day camping or early-autumn hunting trips.

Because of the immense impact bark beetles have had on Colorado forests, as well as the damage introduced pests are now causing in Eastern and Midwestern forests, the Colorado State Forest Service wants to be sure people are aware of the risks associated with moving firewood. The transportation of firewood is a common cause for the accidental introduction of harmful tree insects and diseases to new areas. Insects, fungi and diseases can hitch a ride on cut wood – from both living and dead trees – and are often hidden away under the bark.

“There are many insect and disease risks associated with moving firewood, from spreading native insects like mountain pine beetle around the state to introducing non-native insects from outside our borders,” said Sky Stephens, CSFS forest entomologist.

Stephens says some insects of primary concern that can be present in firewood include the emerald ash borer and gypsy moth – pests that have not yet impacted Colorado but are threats to its deciduous trees. She describes thousand cankers disease, which is already killing most of the black walnut trees in some urban Front Range communities, as another major concern related to moving firewood.

The CSFS offers several firewood tips to help Coloradans protect their trees and forests:

- Always try to burn firewood at the location where you buy or cut it. Leave whatever wood you don't burn.
- Don't ever bring wood into Colorado from other states, or vice-versa.
- Ask firewood dealers questions about the origin of the wood.

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- If using firewood bundles for camping, buy from a local vendor. The best option is wood labeled with the Colorado Forest Products logo; at least 50 percent of this wood is certified to be from Colorado forests, and more than 65 vendors around the state participate in this program.
- Learn to identify the symptoms of common pests in the type of wood you plan to burn.
- If you intend to transport firewood more than a few miles, make sure it is completely dried and ready to burn. The bark should peel off easily and should be removed before transporting the wood.

For more information about insects and diseases that threaten Colorado trees, contact Sky Stephens at 970-491-6303 or contact a local CSFS district office.

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