

EMERALD ASH BORER: IS THE CAMPING PUBLIC AWARE OF EMERALD ASH BORER AND ISSUES RELATING TO THE MOVEMENT OF FIREWOOD?

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ABSTRACT

The exotic emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis* Fairmaire) was identified in Michigan in 2002 and has since been found in a number of other states. This insect has killed millions of ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.) and continues to be found in new locations. A key goal in managing emerald ash borer is to reduce artificial spread through the movement of the insect to new locations in firewood. Inspections of firewood in state and federally operated campgrounds have revealed that ash firewood is still being used and is likely being moved around the state. Public education campaigns have been implemented to inform people about emerald ash borer and associated firewood regulations in Michigan. These educational programs use media that include fliers, billboards, radio and television advertisements, and newspaper articles.

During the summer of 2006, two types of questionnaire-based surveys were conducted at state park campgrounds throughout Michigan to (1) determine public awareness of the regulations associated with the movement of firewood, (2) determine any demographics that influence a patron's knowledge about the firewood regulations, and (3)

identify the components of the educational program that are reaching the most campground patrons. The first type of questionnaire was distributed at selected state parks and self administered by campground patrons. The second type of questionnaire was administered by a researcher at selected state parks.

The questionnaires showed that most of the camping public in Michigan does know about the emerald ash borer. More than 90 percent of the participants claimed to know there are firewood regulations, but less than 4 percent of them actually knew what the regulations were. The surveys also showed that about 30 percent of the participants still move firewood, and more than 50 percent of the people moving firewood travel more than 160 km when camping. Therefore, despite having knowledge about firewood regulations, the camping public still has the potential to move emerald ash borer over significant distances. The types of educational outreach that appear to be the most effective are television, billboards, and flyers/posters. These types of outreach material could be useful in clarifying firewood regulations for the camping public.