



Firewood Best Management Practices

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McCullum Campground, Coopers Rock State Park.
Photo: E. Basham, WVU

What are BMPs?

Best management practices (BMPs) for firewood are guidelines geared toward protecting your health as you process firewood, and the health and productivity of the woodlots where your firewood is harvested.

Firewood has been identified as a way that non-native invasive species— such as the emerald ash borer and the European gypsy moth— are transported to new areas (APHIS 2011). Firewood can be produced in a way that prevents the spread of wood-borne insects and diseases. Since forests in the US do not have the defenses to ward off invasive species, it is up to us to protect them by following firewood BMPs!

This information sheet addresses various voluntary BMPs that have been suggested for firewood producers in various states around the US; namely, those states that border West Virginia: Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Kentucky.

Basic BMPs for Firewood Producers

#1: Don't move firewood

Local is better. All firewood producers and consumers alike should not move or sell firewood more than 50 miles from where it was harvested. This lessens the chance that any bugs or diseases can be spread to new areas. Just because you can't see the bugs or signs of disease does not mean that your firewood is clean!

Let your customers, friends and family know that you are concerned about invasive threats and are doing all you can to prevent their spread. Let them know that they can help by buying "local" firewood— from you!

#2: Learn about quarantines

Educate yourself on state and federal firewood quarantines. West Virginia is currently under a statewide federal quarantine for emerald ash borer, and over 20 counties are under federal quarantine for gypsy moth. Anyone desiring to transport ANY firewood out of WV to an un-quarantined county or state must first contact your state Department of Agriculture (West Virginia: 304-558-2212) office to make sure they are in compliance with all regulations.

#3: Learn about pests and diseases

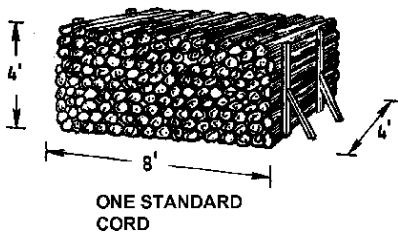
Educate yourself on the main invasive forest insects and diseases that threaten the Appalachian region, and learn their respective signs of infestation or contamination. Report any findings to a local Department of Agriculture office.

#4: Keep records of harvests and sales

Keep records of your harvests, including where you harvested the wood, species, dates and amounts. Also, it is a good idea to keep the same kinds of records of your sales, including dates of sales and deliveries, and customer contact information.

#5: Provide your customers with receipts

Provide your customers with receipts or bills of sale giving them information such as such as wood origin, species, amount, price paid, date of sale or delivery and your business contact information.



ONE STANDARD CORD

A cord of firewood measures 128 cuft.
Photo: University of Georgia

#6: Practice good marketing

Most state departments of weights and measures forbid the use of the terms “pile,” “rick,” or “truckload” when referring to the sale of firewood. A standard unit of firewood, the cord (a stack 4’x4’x8’ or 128 cubic feet), provides your customers with the most accurate description of firewood quantity.

#7: Dry wood burns better

De-bark and season your wood for at least one year or longer. This makes it less likely to provide suitable habitat for the development of insect larvae or diseases. Depending on the size of your operation, you may want to invest in a heat kiln. Wood burns the best at 20% moisture content or below. Providing your customers with clean, dry wood also guarantees that they will come back next year for a high-quality product!

#8: Forest management

If you harvest your own trees for firewood, be sure to take the poorly formed trees first and follow the forestry slogan, “when thinning, keep the biggest and the best.” If you cut down only the straight, healthy trees, you are literally cutting down the future value of your forest. Contact your local Division of Forestry office (WVDOF headquarters: 304-558-2788) for a list of consulting foresters who can help you manage your woodlot.



Gypsy moth egg sacs on firewood.
Photo: M. Zubrik. Forest Research Institute—Slovakia

#9: Practice personal safety!

Felling trees, improper planning when using a chainsaw or wood splitter, a simple slip or just lifting the wrong way can spell disaster for firewood producers. According to a 2005 study in the Journal of Industrial Medicine, occasional woodcutters are three times as likely to injure themselves than loggers when performing activities such as cutting firewood. Proper personal protective equipment such as a helmet with ear protection, goggles, steel-toe non-skid boots, well-fitted chainsaw chaps, long-sleeved shirt and gripping gloves should always be worn. Learn to use your chainsaw properly, work well-rested and drug-free, and **NEVER** work alone!



EAB larvae galleries on firewood
Photo: PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources—Forestry Archive

#10: Consider certification

More and more states are offering firewood producers the opportunity to become USDA certified, meaning they have registered with the state department of agriculture as having certified pest-free firewood. This usually requires an inspection of firewood origin, treatment methods and storage. Certification assures customers that you are doing your best to slow the spread of invasive species by making sure your firewood is not a carrier!

For more information contact Dave McGill, WVU Forestry Extension Specialist (304-293-5930; dmcgill@wvu.edu)

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Personal Protective Equipment.

Photo: www.justlawnmowers.co.uk



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