



## Firewood Best Management Practices

California Firewood Task Force

### **Cutting Firewood**

- Choose firewood sources close to where you will be using the wood to avoid transporting pests or diseases to new, uninfested areas.
- Cut wood from late summer to late fall to minimize the risk of obtaining firewood infested with pests that emerge in the spring and early summer months.
- Familiarize yourself with laws and regulations regarding cutting and transporting firewood. Contact your county agricultural commissioner or state or federal forester for information.
- Debark the wood at the cutting site whenever practical as many pests reside in bark.
- Chip or grind unused wood and bark to a particle size of less than 1 inch when possible to eliminate most tree-killing insects.

### **Purchasing Firewood**

- Buy It Where You Burn It - Buy local firewood to minimize the risks of moving harmful insects and diseases in or on firewood into areas not yet exposed to them.
- Access Firewood Scout at <http://firewoodscout.org/> to find firewood dealers local to the area where you will be using the wood.
- Before purchasing unlabeled wood, ask the firewood dealer key questions to evaluate if the wood is at risk of containing pests and diseases (See <http://firewoodscout.org/s/CA/> for questions).
- Always ask for a bill of sale or permit when buying bulk or unlabeled firewood from local dealers. The bill of sale should list the transaction date, volume of wood sold, tree species, location where the trees were cut, and price paid.

### **Transporting Firewood**

- Before obtaining firewood from a source local to where you will be using it, check the guidelines for your destination to be sure outside firewood is allowable.
- Firewood should only be transported locally and within the same ecosystem.

### **Drying and Treating Firewood**

- If firewood must be moved, dry it for 2 years before transporting it. Most tree-killing pests and diseases in wood at the time a tree was felled are no longer present after 2 years. Drying wood for this length of time also helps assure the wood will burn hotter and cleaner. Dried firewood still must be handled with caution as wood decay pests and diseases become established in downed material. Examine the wood carefully for rot and insects or other issues; leave behind bad pieces.

- Heat treating infested wood material in a kiln to an internal wood temperature of 140° F for a minimum of 60 minutes is an effective alternative for eliminating insects and diseases from firewood.
- Removing greater than 95% of the bark from a single tree can kill or reduce certain insects found feeding solely in or under the bark, such as bark beetles and some wood borers.

### **Storage**

- Stack firewood away from living trees to avoid spreading pests and diseases from the firewood to healthy trees.
- Store firewood away from buildings (ex., home, shed) as wood-boring pests can tunnel directly from the wood into the structure. While it is typically recommended that firewood be stored at a distance of at least 3 ft. from structures, check with your local fire agency to be sure requirements regarding storage distances for fire safety are met.

### **Stacking Firewood**

- Stack green, wet firewood with the bark side facing up in an area that is exposed to the sun to promote maximum drying.
- Cover firewood in a well-ventilated area (such as in a shed or under a lean-to) or with a tarp or plastic sheeting during the rainy season, leaving the sides of the stack exposed to the open air to avoid locking in moisture.
- Avoid stacking firewood directly on the ground as direct ground contact will expose the logs to moisture and rotting. If you are stacking it on a hard surface, such as a concrete slab, still consider raising the stack to assist with airflow.
- Never stack firewood indoors – in addition to being a fire hazard, insects can emerge from the wood and potentially cause harm to the structure.
- Leave a few inches of space to allow for airflow when stacking firewood against a wall or fence. Similarly, if you are making multiple stacks, leave a few inches of space between the stacks.
- Plan for wood to shrink as it dries, causing stacks to shift over time.

### **Safety Precautions**

- Firewood piles can fall over. Store firewood away from children and pets.
- Do not spray firewood with any chemicals (ex., insecticides). Doing so can cause harmful vapors to be emitted when the wood is burned.
- Never burn pressure-treated or painted wood, as the burning chemicals can release toxic fumes into your living space or the atmosphere.

### **For More Information**

- Visit the California Firewood Task Force website ([www.firewood.ca.gov](http://www.firewood.ca.gov)) for information on invasive species affecting California's urban and wildland forests as well as for additional information on firewood and the Buy It Where You Burn It campaign. For questions, email [firewoodinfo@firewood.ca.gov](mailto:firewoodinfo@firewood.ca.gov).