The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has placed Stearns County under an emergency quarantine after emerald ash borer (EAB) was found in the city of Sauk Centre.

City workers noticed several trees that showed signs of EAB damage and alerted the MDA. Department of Agriculture staff then examined the trees and collected samples of emerald ash borer larvae for confirmation.

Because this is the first time EAB has been identified in Stearns County, the MDA is enacting an emergency quarantine to limit the movement of firewood and ash material out of the county. This will reduce the risk of further spreading the tree-killing insect. A total of 18 Minnesota counties, including Stearns County, are now under a full or partial quarantine to prevent the spread of this highly destructive tree pest.

"Given the location of this find, we can be certain that emerald ash borer was brought into Stearns County by someone moving EAB-infested ash," said Mark Abrahamson, Director of MDA's Plant Protection Division. "This highlights the importance of quarantines and the need to limit the movement of firewood and other ash products around the state to protect our ash trees."

There are three easy steps Minnesotans can take to keep EAB from spreading:

- Don't transport firewood. Buy firewood locally, purchase heat-treated certified firewood, and burn it where you buy it;
- Be aware of the quarantine restrictions. If you live in a quarantined county, be aware of the restrictions on movement of products such as ash trees, wood chips, and firewood; and,
- Watch your ash trees for infestation. If you think your ash tree is infested, use the "Does my tree have Emerald Ash Borer?" (/sites/default/files/inline-files/eab-treeshaveit_1.pdf) guide. Suspect infestations can be reported to MDA's Arrest the Pest line at 1-888-545-6684 or arrest.the.pest@state.mn.us.
Emerald ash borer larvae kill ash trees by tunneling under the bark and feeding on the part of the tree that moves nutrients up and down the trunk. The invasive insect was first discovered in Minnesota in 2009 and is now found in 35 states.

Minnesota is highly susceptible to the destruction caused by EAB. The state has approximately one billion ash trees, the most of any state in the nation.

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