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MEDIA RELEASE

Untreated Pine firewood off limits this winter

As the temperature dips, Perth residents are being asked to burn any stored untreated pine and not to collect pine firewood this winter, to assist the State Government's European House Borer (EHB) program.

This serious timber pest of untreated pine has been identified in two main clusters and a handful of isolated sites within the Perth metropolitan area since January 2004. EHB has mainly been found in dead pine trees, logs and in dead branches on living pine trees. To date, it has not been found in structural timber.

EHB Program Director Lisa Christy said "The government is taking steps to protect and hopefully get rid of this exotic pest from Western Australia. Community assistance is vital and while we are grateful for the current high level of public support, we need their help to stop the human spread of EHB via the movement of untreated pine and to reduce the availability of suitable habitat."

"Extensive state wide surveillance has been conducted, with teams of officers checking dead pine trees and other untreated pine materials for oval shaped exit holes created as the EHB emerge from untreated pine as an adult beetle that can fly short distances," Ms Christy said.

"Approximately 100,000 hectares of pine plantations have been inspected and 35,000 residents in affected areas have been surveyed to identify any untreated pine materials at high risk of EHB.

"We appear to have detected the borer relatively early and with the public's continued assistance, we hope to be able to contain and eradicate EHB before it becomes a problem in Western Australia.

"We are asking people not to move any untreated pine logs or timber and to burn any untreated pine in wood heaters this winter. Alternatively, any untreated pine materials can be taken to the local refuse site or rubbish tip to be chipped and reused as mulch, which has no risk of EHB.

"It is great that the majority of the population are keen to recycle, however with the detection of EHB, untreated pine will need to be an exception. We are urging the public not to recycle, collect and store untreated pine. The less suitable habitat we leave lying about for EHB, the better chance we have of eradicating it. We would also like to remind people not to burn treated pine," Ms Christy said.

The public are asked to check any untreated pine that has been stored outside for characteristic 5mm to 10mm oval shaped exit holes, running with the grain of the timber, before burning or disposing of it at the rubbish tip. Reports of suspected EHB activity allow for monitoring of EHB and detection of any further affected materials in the surrounding area.

To report suspected EHB activity or for further information, please contact the Freecall Hotline: 1800 084 881 or visit www.ehb.wa.gov.au.

ENDS

Media contact: Verity Neale - Shearman PR - on 9449 3999 or 0407 479 046