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New regulations protect Australia from exotic pest

New regulations have been introduced by the State Government to protect Australia from the European House Borer (EHB).

EHB, which attacks untreated pine, has been found predominantly in dead pine trees and dead branches in two main clusters of Perth suburbs (Shire of Mundaring and Gnangara/Ellenbrook area), incorporating a total of 29 suburbs.

The regulations restrict movement of untreated pine in some areas in an attempt to limit the unintentional spread of EHB across Perth and to assist with the eradication of EHB from Australia.

"We are fortunate to have caught the incursion early and are confident that with the public's support we can continue to contain this unwanted pest," EHB Program Director, Lisa Christy said.

"The only way we can achieve this is to limit the movement of untreated pine out of areas that could possibly contain affected materials.

"This will assist us in our aim of eradicating this serious pest from Western Australia."

Areas where EHB activity, which could be live larvae or beetles, has been found are classified as Priority Management Zones (PMZs). Under the regulations, all properties within 100 metres of the affected property form a PMZ.

To date 59 PMZs have been identified.

The movement restrictions will initially prohibit the movement of any untreated pine out of the identified areas, unless it has been fumigated and appropriately treated (a list of treatments available is on the internet at www.fifwa.asn.au/europeanHouseBorer.htm). This includes pine firewood and other pine from the bush and plantations, as well as items made from untreated pine such as furniture, floorboards, cupboards and pallets.

"This means items such as untreated pine outdoor furniture cannot be moved outside a PMZ if you are moving house or selling the items, unless you have it treated," Ms Christy said.

People caught moving untreated pine from a PMZ can be fined between \$500 and \$2000.

All property and business owners within a PMZ will receive a kit outlining what they should do to prevent the spread of EHB. The only disposal options available are having the pine chipped, burning it or sending it to a council waste site for deep burial.

"The government has moved swiftly to identify EHB-affected materials and contain the spread of the borer," Ms Christy said.

"So far the pest has not been found in any structural timber and we are confident that we can beat the borer before it becomes a threat to the timber industry or property."

The Department of Agriculture and Food and the Forest Products Commission have conducted extensive surveillance, investigating more than 100,000 hectares in the south-west of the State. In addition almost 48,000 homes have been door-knocked around known affected areas, with more than 35,000 residents completing surveys about EHB and sources of untreated pine.

"It is important now that we contain the spread of the borer," Ms Christy said.

“It is hoped that with continuing public support we can stop this pest, because it has the potential do a lot of damage.”

Based on a South African outbreak in the 1940s, modelling suggests if the pest spreads nationally it could cause up to \$6 billion damage to property and businesses.

Further information on PMZs, a list of affected suburbs and how to identify EHB can be found at www.ehb.wa.gov.au. Businesses and property owners in affected areas should check any untreated pine or external pine products and report any signs of EHB via the Freecall Hotline on 1800 084 881. Those looking to build, renovate or extend are urged to speak to their builder, surveyor or local council about Building Notes that have been issued in the area. The full *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection (European House Borer) Regulations 2006* are available from www.slp.wa.gov.au.

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