



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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EMERALD ASH BORER FOUND IN RHODE ISLAND

State will join federal quarantine covering much of the eastern US enacted to prevent the spread of this destructive, invasive pest – which attacks only ash trees – to uninfested states

Providence – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) today announced that **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)**, a destructive forest insect from Asia, has been found for the first time in Rhode Island and that the state has joined the federal quarantine covering much of the eastern United States to slow the spread of this alien invader.

Officials with the Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS) of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) have confirmed the identification of a beetle recently found in Washington County. The insect, which attacks only ash (*Fraxinus*) trees, was captured during annual monitoring surveys conducted jointly by DEM, the University of Rhode Island, and the USDA. **With many more traps collected from around Rhode Island now being examined by APHIS, it is highly likely that there will be more positive EAB identifications to be announced.**



David Cappaert, Michigan State University, www.invasive.org

EAB accidentally arrived in North America via wooden packing material exported from China and was first detected in Detroit in 2002. The invasive pest overwinters as larva under the bark of ash trees. As they grow, larvae feed and zigzag through tree tissue, leaving S-shaped tunnels that cut off the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients. Once infested, ash trees rapidly decline and are killed in three to five years. In Asia, EAB has co-evolved with native ash trees, so there are natural enemies and pathogens that keep EAB levels in check. That is not the case in North America, however, where there are very few if any known enemies and pathogens to control EAB.

EAB has been detected in 35 states, counting Rhode Island, and in three Canadian provinces. ([See USDA detection map.](#)) Since its discovery, EAB has killed tens of millions of ash trees and has cost municipalities, property owners, nursery operators, and forest products industries tens of millions of dollars, according to APHIS.

Although ash trees constitute only about one to two percent of RI forests, ash has been widely planted in urban public areas as landscape and shade trees on streets, campuses, and lawns and in parks and urban woodlots. A compromised ash tree may represent a potential risk to health and safety because of the public use of these areas. EAB threatens all ash species in RI, including white ash, green ash, and black ash. There are no proven means to control EAB in forested areas, though repeated pesticide treatments can help protect individual trees. **EAB does not pose any human health risk.** DEM's Divisions of [Agriculture](#) and [Forest Environment](#) are ready to assist municipalities by providing outreach, training, and technical assistance.

DEM is finalizing an action plan aimed at slowing EAB's spread and assisting RI landowners and municipalities in raising awareness of EAB and other invasive pests, identifying and inventorying ash trees, and reducing risks. The plan's first step will be joining the federal quarantine, which now includes much of the eastern US. DEM's Division of Forest Environment is preparing a guidance document to help communities and homeowners develop response plans.

Slowing the spread of EAB is very important. The adult EAB can fly only short distances, but people have accelerated their spread by moving infested material, particularly firewood. Larvae are easily moved in firewood, logs, and nursery stock because they are hard to detect under the trees' bark. Residents and visitors are reminded to protect Rhode Island's forests by buying and burning local firewood. Wood dealers, loggers, and arborists should check state and federal restrictions prior to transporting ash out of Rhode Island. DEM has adopted the [Don't Move Firewood](#) campaign developed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and uses outreach materials developed by TNC to share this message.

DEM plans to conduct informational meetings soon; details will be announced. For more information on Emerald Ash Borer or other exotic agricultural pests, invasive insects, or plants, please visit [DEM's website](#).

To report a suspected exotic or invasive insect or plant, please fill out the [DEM Invasive Species Reporting Form](#), which is posted on DEM's website.

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