

EU TO REQUIRE TREATMENT OF CONIFEROUS NON-MANUFACTURED WOOD PACKING MATERIAL

The Commission of the European Communities has adopted emergency measures requiring the treatment and marking of all new and used coniferous (e.g. pine, spruce, fir) non-manufactured wood packing material (NMWP) originating in the United States, Canada, China, or Japan beginning October 1, 2001, to prevent the introduction of the pinewood nematode. The pinewood nematode is a microscopic eelworm which has caused extensive mortality in pines in Japan and China.

European concern over the possible introduction and establishment of the pinewood nematode has heightened over the past couple of years after an outbreak in Portugal and interceptions of the pinewood nematode in NMWP from the United States, Canada, China, and Japan. The source of the outbreak in Portugal has not been positively identified but packaging material is believed to have been the likely pathway.

Work is currently underway in the United States to set up a program to meet the measures adopted by the EU. The United States has chosen to utilize the heat treated or kiln-dried mitigation option to eliminate this pest on NMWP. The International Plant Protection Convention which is recognized by the World Trade Organization as the official plant protection body will likely adopt measures very similar to those of the EU in April 2002 for all NMWP (softwoods and hardwoods). The American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC), at the request of USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has agreed to develop and oversee the United States' program. The program will require on-site inspections of NMWP manufacturing facilities to verify compliance. On-site inspections will be done by inspection agencies accredited by ALSC.

When Do the New Measures Take Effect?

The measures will take effect on October 1, 2001. Exporters with shipments leaving the United States on or after that date for the EU and containing new or used NMWP made entirely of or partially of coniferous lumber will need to ensure that the NMWP meets the new requirements.

Will I Be Affected?

EU imports from the United States were valued at \$169.2 billion in 1999 and a significant portion of U.S. export will be affected by the measures since most goods are transported using NMWP (e.g. pallets, boxes, crates). It is estimated that upward of 30 percent of the new pallets produced annually (roughly 450 million pallets) and a higher percentage of the new pallets used for exports are made entirely of or partially of coniferous lumber. A significant proportion of the pallets and containers already in circulation also are made entirely of or partially of coniferous lumber.

What Do the New Measures Require?

The emergency measures require that all new and used NMWP originating from the four countries be:

- heat treated or kiln-dried to a minimum core temperature of 56° C for at least 30 minutes in a closed chamber or kiln which has been tested, evaluated and approved officially for this purpose;
- pressure treated with an approved chemical in accordance with an officially recognized technical specification; or
- fumigated with an approved chemical in accordance with an officially recognized technical specification.

The coniferous NMWP must also display an officially approved mark enabling the identification of the treater and the location of treatment. The use of the mark will be limited to NMWP manufacturers participating in the APHIS-ALSC program. (Coniferous NMWP originating in China must also be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate.)

What Happens if My NMWP Does Not Comply with the EU's Requirements?

The EU has indicated that any NMWP that does not comply with the requirements will be treated to eliminate the risk of the pinewood nematode prior to entry, be refused entry, or be destroyed. This will likely necessitate the off-loading of any cargo from the NMWP, and may cause considerable delay.

Who Should You Contact for Additional Information?

Questions concerning the NMWP program should be directed to USDA/APHIS/Export Services (301-734-8537), USDA/FAS/Forest and Fisheries Products Division (202-720-0638) or the American Lumber Standard Committee (301-972-1700).

For a list of NMWP facilities participating in the program, contact:

- California Lumber Inspection Service (209-334-6956)
- Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association (207-829-6901)
- Northern Softwood Lumber Bureau (207-829-6901)
- Pacific Lumber Inspection Bureau (253-835-3344)
- Redwood Inspection Service (415-382-0662)
- Renewable Resource Associates, Inc. (770-482-9385)
- Southern Pine Inspection Bureau (850-434-2611)
- Timber Products Inspection (770-922-8000)
- West Coast Lumber Inspection Bureau (503-639-0651)
- Western Wood Products Association (503-224-3930)