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### **Emerald Ash Borer confirmed in Oak Park**

Following an inspection Friday of an ash tree in the parkway of the 700 block of North Lombard Avenue, the Illinois Department of Agriculture today confirmed signs that the small beetle that has devastated ash trees across the upper Midwest is in Oak Park.

State officials peeled back bark on the tree, looking for the small D-shaped holes where the new adult insects emerge for the first time. They also hung five purple EAB traps – one near each corner of the Village and the fifth within blocks of where the tree was tested. The traps resemble box kites and contain a substance that attracts the beetles and catches them with a sticky residue, helping officials gauge the extent of the bug's presence.

The official word – Oak Park's addition to the growing list of Illinois communities where the beetle had been confirmed posted on the [IDA web site](#) – came as no surprise to Village arborists. Efforts began more than two years ago to warn residents about the dangers of the Emerald Ash Borer and the risk of bringing it to Oak Park in firewood from Michigan, Ohio and Indiana where the tiny bug has led to the destruction of millions of ash trees.

"We had been saying for some time now that it was not a question of if, but when," said Village Forester Jim Semelka. "But there is no need to panic. We have an inventory of all of our trees and will systematically inspect each ash tree on public property to determine the number of those exhibiting symptoms of EAB. We then will develop removal plans accordingly. These trees will not die suddenly or become hazardous in the short term."

Oak Park sits deep within a quarantine area that covers much of Northeastern Illinois, a location that makes it unlikely borers from the Village could infest any area not already within the quarantine boundaries. State officials say that for locations such as Oak Park that already are within the quarantine area, it is up to the local government to determine the proper strategy for removal of infested trees, the only known successful management strategy.

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[Village foresters](#) will first focus on parkway ash trees, removing those that prove to be infested, their condition determining the priority of removal. [Village officials](#) will need to determine how best to deal with ash trees on private property as well. A long-term strategy, likely five or more years, will be needed, they say.

Semelka said he will urge officials to view this situation as an opportunity to improve the Village's urban forest. Many of the current issues with Village trees came from the well-intentioned, but perhaps too quick response to Dutch Elm Disease, he said. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the priority in many communities, including Oak Park, was just replacing a diseased tree as quickly as possible, with little attention given to important considerations such as spacing, species diversity and proper growth habits.

As diseased ash trees are removed in response to EAB, Semelka said many of the mistakes of the past can be corrected with patience and care in how replacements are selected and where they are planted.

The Emerald Ash Borer is believed to have arrived in the United States in southeastern Michigan as a stowaway in wooden packing materials from Asia, later making its way to neighboring states in firewood. The beetle is small and stealth-like in its behavior patterns and is extremely difficult to detect.

Adult ash borers gnaw their way out of trees in early June, emerging from D-shaped holes about one-eighth in diameter. The small, metallic-green beetles – about a half-inch long and an eighth-inch wide – then lay their eggs on fresh bark, often traveling up to a half mile from where they emerged. Once the larvae hatch, they burrow into the tree and carve tunnels into the vascular system, eventually cutting off the flow of nutrients and killing the tree.

The most recognizable signs of infestation are declining tops and deadwood higher up in the tree. Sprouts from the trunk and roots are a somewhat later sign.

For more information on EAB, visit [www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us), call 708.358.5700 or e-mail [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).

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