

Dear neighbor,

We are writing to you with an important announcement and a request for a prompt response.

You have probably noticed that most ash trees in the area are dying; this is the result of the emerald ash borer, an invasive insect that is decimating the region's ash trees. The town has a legal responsibility to maintain the 50-foot right-of-way on our public roads, and as the ash trees die, they're becoming a serious hazard. As they begin to fall, we risk serious interruptions to the movement of ambulances and fire trucks, as well as extensive interference in people's ability to get to work and school, to say nothing of the threat to residents' safety. Our town has many miles of roads and there are thousands of ash trees along them.

Over the past year, a group of volunteers has conducted an inventory of the ash trees growing in the highway right-of-way. Town officials have attended training seminars provided by the State of Vermont to learn about the emerald ash borer and about methods for the safe removal of affected trees. Over the next several years – as fast as our Department of Public Works (DPW) can do it – the Town will begin the process of removing ash trees within the 50-foot right of way along town roads. (We will not be able to remove the ones that are near power lines, for which Green Mountain Power is ultimately responsible.) We will prioritize roads that have the most ash trees growing in the right-of-way. As a significant cost-saving measure, the Select Board will, in some cases, be instructing the DPW to remove other dead or dying trees standing in close proximity to the ash trees in instances where those trees are posing imminent threats to safety.

Our hope is that much of the wood taken down will be usable for firewood. Property owners who want to keep the wood taken down along their property will have that wood left for them. **The ash trees in the right-of-way along the edge of your property will be removed in the coming weeks.** It is important that you contact Naomi Miller at _____ immediately to discuss what you want done with the trees removed from the edge of your property. Additionally, a member of this Emerald Ash Borer Committee will be happy to visit your property with you to review and discuss the plans and answer any other questions you may have.

Respectfully,

The Shaftsbury Emerald Ash Borer Committee