

NEWS

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County protects firewood consumers from light loads

With winter fast approaching, now is the time many San Bernardino County residents begin shopping for firewood.

However, most consumers are probably not aware of the many laws that are in place to ensure they get what they pay for.

The County of San Bernardino Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures is charged with enforcing these laws and investigating complaints from consumers.

Firewood can only be sold by a measure known as a cord, a fraction of a cord, or by the cubic foot. State law prohibits selling wood by the truckload, "face cord," pile, wheelbarrow, or other informal measurement because these methods make it nearly impossible for consumers to determine if they are getting the same amount with each delivery.

One exception to the law states that quantities of less than one-eighth of a cord may be sold in containers that state the amount. Manufactured products like charcoal or starter logs may be sold by weight. Bundles of firewood must be labeled in cubic feet.

A cord of wood is defined as 128 cubic feet of wood, well-stowed and packed. An example of a cord is a stack of wood eight feet long, four feet wide, and four feet high. Consumers should insist that the wood is stacked neatly with as little spacing as possible to ensure they are getting their money's worth. Firewood dealers are required to provide receipts for amounts of one-eighth of a cord or greater with their name, address, and the same phone number that was used to order the wood, along with the quantity that was delivered.

When possible consumers should pay by check rather than cash and write the amount of wood purchased on the check. If for some reason the cord of wood does not measure up, payment on the check can be stopped until the issue is resolved.

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The County of San Bernardino Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures will inspect deliveries of wood to ensure residents are getting all of the wood they paid for. The county recommends residents do the following:

- Avoid firewood dealers selling by the pickup load.
- Have the wood stacked or stack it immediately after delivery and measure the quantity.
- Always get a written receipt.
- If you believe you didn't get all the wood you ordered, call the firewood dealer immediately.
- If they fail to correct the matter, call (909) 387-2140 or 1-800-734-9459 to file a complaint.

Also, please remember to stack wood in a place where it won't be a fire hazard. Never stack wood under porches or decks.