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IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Surprise! Emerald Ash Borer Takes Shortcut to the Twin Cities

By **PAUL DIEGNAU, CGCS**
Keller Golf Course, St. Paul

EAB has done some serious leap-frogging in the past year. Who would have thought that the Twin Cities would be its first recognized stop in Minnesota? On May 14 of this year, that scenario became fact with the discovery of an infestation in St. Paul. Unless you have been living under a rock for the past few weeks, you are no doubt aware of this finding and the potential economic, ecologic and aesthetic impacts this pest brings with it.

Back in the Spring of 2008, I joined the EAB First Detector program established by the University of Minnesota Extension Service in conjunction with the MN Department of Agriculture and the MN Department of Natural Resources. The program uses trained volunteers to help MN property owners identify the first incident and subsequent spread of EAB. There are currently about 200 volunteers located throughout the state.

In mid-May, I was contacted by the MDA with my first "case" to investigate. This was exciting! I contacted the homeowner to arrange a meeting on his property in a suburb of St. Paul. He was leaving for the remainder of the day but suggested I stop by, take a look and let him know what I find. The suspicious tree, as I understood it, was located behind the mailbox in his front yard. I was anxious to get going. I arrived at the property and began my inspection...one problem though...I could not find an ash tree in his front yard! Surely, he had not mistaken that sickly elm tree for an ash tree. I left a follow-up voice message explaining the "missing" ash tree and asked the homeowner to call me back in the event I had misunderstood his directions or to arrange another meeting. The return call never came.

The point of my ramblings is this; when dealing with the public take nothing for granted. Even the most basic of information may be incorrect. This in turn leads me to the purpose of my prose. Members and clients at our golf facilities constantly approach us as Golf Course Superintendents (experts) for advice on subjects pertaining to turf, landscaping and the great outdoors. With EAB confirmed in the state, homeowners need guidance and a source for accurate information when it comes to the trees on their property. The call volume for the MDA's Arrest the Pest hotline has increased dramatically since the local discovery. This is a great opportunity for you to step up as an "unofficial" EAB First Detector at your club or golf course.

To summarize, the most important EAB identifiers are:

- Adult metallic green beetles exit the tree via D-shaped holes
- The segmented larval stage moves beneath the bark of the tree and leaves behind S-shaped galleries
- Initial canopy dieback occurs in the upper one-third of the tree and continues to spread throughout the entire tree
- Epicormic growth (water sprouts) growing from the base of the tree
- Vertical splits occur in the bark on the trunk of the tree

(Editor's Note: Please go to www.mgcsa.org to find information from Michigan State University and the MDA website that will assist you when answering questions or inspecting potential EAB-infested trees. Post this information at your facility for your golfers. It will initiate discussion and promote you as a valuable resource. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's "Arrest the Pest" Hotline is 651-201-6684 for the Metro Area and 1-888-545-6684 for Greater Minnesota.)