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DON'T GET TAKEN TO THE WOOD SHED:
THE CORD IS THE STANDARD MEASUREMENT FOR SALE

SACRAMENTO, December 3, 2009 – As winter nears and the nights turn chilly, many people will choose to heat their homes with a nice, warm wood fire in the fireplace. While there are many wood dealers eager to sell at attractive prices, how do you know if you're getting a good, fair deal? The only way to know for sure is to measure what is sold.

Firewood has its own special unit of measurement called a "cord." Firewood, in units of 1/8th of a cord and above, must be sold by the cord or fractions of a cord. A cord of wood by law must equal 128 cubic feet. To determine if you have a cord, the wood must be measured when it is "ranked and well stowed." This means the wood is stacked neatly in a row with the pieces of wood parallel and touching with as few gaps as possible. If, when measured, the width times the height, times the length equals 128 cubic feet, it is a cord of wood.

Be wary of terms such as "face cord," "rack," "rick," "tier," "pile" or "truck-load," as these terms are illegal to use in the sale of firewood. If a seller uses such terms, consumers should be on alert for a possible problem.

Some wood dealers try to sell firewood from a pick-up truck. Be on your guard, because a pick-up cannot hold a cord of firewood. An 8-foot truck bed can hold one-half of a cord while a 6-foot bed can barely hold one-third of a cord.

Make sure you get an invoice or delivery ticket that contains the name and address of the seller, the date purchased or delivered, the quantity purchased, and the price. The seller is required by law to give you this information in writing. You may want to take note of the license plate of the delivery vehicle.

Finally, if you believe you have not received the quantity you ordered and paid for, call the seller to correct the problem. Try to maintain the wood in the condition it was delivered, take a photograph, and do not burn any. If the seller can't or won't correct the problem, contact your local county weights and measures office as soon as possible at:

http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/county/county_contacts.html or the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Division of Measurement Standards at (916) 229-3000.

For local consumer issues about wood sales in Santa Barbara County, please call the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at 681-5600 (Santa Barbara) and 934-6200 (Santa Maria).

*The California Department of Food and Agriculture protects and promotes
California's agriculture.*

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