



Firewood

Information Packet



Department of Cable and Consumer Services
Regulation and Licensing Branch
Fairfax County, Virginia

Firewood For Home Heating

Virginians have found wood to be a desirable source of home-heating energy. During the last heating season, Virginia households burned 1.9 million cords of fuel wood. In terms of volume harvested, sawlogs, pulpwood and fuel wood are the Commonwealth's most important forest products.

The Code of Virginia on Firewood

- [3.2-5600](#): "Cord" means the amount of wood that is contained in a space of 128 cubic feet when the wood is stacked and well stowed.
 - [3.2-5641](#): It shall be unlawful to use the word "cord" or any abbreviation thereof other than to mean the standard as defined in § [3.2-5600](#) in, or in connection with the purchase or sale of pulpwood, firewood, tanbark, or any forest product customarily measured in cords of any size whatever, or in connection with any quotation of price, or measurement of, or settlement, or payment for any such wood, bark or product, in reference to any cord, unit or measurement.
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Units of Measure for Firewood

The [Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services](#) (VDACS) is responsible for the regulation of fuel wood sales. [2 VAC 5-340-160](#) specifies that wood for use as fuel in bulk form "shall be advertised, offered for sale and sold only by measure, using the term 'cord' and fractional parts of a cord, or the cubic meter". The Regulation also requires presentation of a delivery ticket or sales invoice stating quantity and price upon delivery by the seller to the purchaser. Failure to comply with this Regulation is a Class "A" misdemeanor.

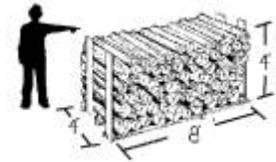
The terms "face cord," "rack," "pile," "truckload," or terms of similar import shall not be used when advertising, offering for sale, or selling wood for use as fuel. An agreement after visual inspection, between buyer and seller in the sale of fireplace or stove wood by the "truckload" shall be permitted.

Occasionally, very small quantities of firewood are sold on a weight basis, and this can be especially confusing because the weight of wood varies greatly depending upon the moisture content. A cord of wood, depending upon species and dryness, generally weighs between 2 and 3 tons. Purchase of a ton of green wood could mean that you are buying 1/2 ton of wood and 1/2 ton of water; however, if the wood is air-dry, you would be buying about 1,670 pounds of wood and only 330 pounds of water. When buying firewood on a weight basis, you should be sure to specify whether or not prices are based on green or air-dry wood.

What is a cord?

Firewood quantities are sometimes difficult to estimate. The official measurement of firewood is a “cord”. To help you make an accurate estimate, here is how some common units of firewood measurement compare to the full cord.

A **full cord** is a large amount of wood. When neatly and tightly stacked, it measures 4 feet high by 4 feet wide by eight feet long (4' x 4' x 8') and has a volume of 128 cubic feet.



Not neat or tightly stacked

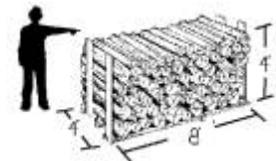
Neat and tightly stacked



Two full-size pick-up truck loads (8 foot box) equals **one full cord**, whether the wood is stacked carefully so it is about level with the truck box sides, or is thrown into the truck box with the top of the pile about as high as the cab.



x 2 =



Full-size pick-up truck (8')

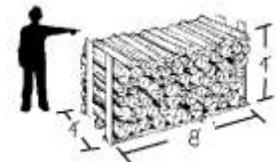
times two equals

One full cord

Four compact pick-up truck loads (6 foot box) equals **one full cord** of wood, whether the wood is stacked carefully so it is about level with the truck box sides, or is thrown into the truck box with the top of the pile about as high as the cab.



x 4 =



Compact pick-up truck (6')

times four equals

One full cord

The most common firewood piece length is 16 in., or one-third of the width for a full cord, but other lengths are also available.

A frequently asked question by wood burners is the price of each cord. Price is important; however agreement on a standard way to measure and transfer wood is equally important. Both the buyer and seller must agree and understand the procedure.

Volume transfer: the cord

Firewood must, by law, be sold by the cord or fractional part of a cord. It must be accompanied by a bill of sale in accordance with requirements of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. As defined by the National Conference on Weights and Measures and Virginia rules and regulations, a gross cord of firewood is the amount of wood, ranked and well stowed, contained in a space of 128 cubic feet. Ranked and well stowed means pieces are placed in a line or row with pieces touching on their ends and parallel to each other and stacked in a compact manner.

Other descriptions of volumes of cordwood such as rack, rank, pickup load, and face cord must not be used. The only legal terms are cord and fractions of a cord.

To transfer a load of cordwood equitably, the buyer and seller must jointly measure the pile of wood. This is probably best done when the wood (tightly stacked) is still on the truck or conveyance vehicle.

A seller should prepare a price list, preferably on a printed sheet, to distribute to potential buyers (Example below).

The suggested selling procedure for transferring cordwood is as follows:

- Jointly measure the closely stacked pile on the bed of the truck. Measure length, width and height in inches to the closest whole inch.
- Multiply the length times width times height to get the gross volume in cubic inches. (L (inches) x W (inches) x H (inches) = Gross volume (inches³)
- Divide "gross cubic inches" by the number of cubic inches in a gross cord minus 220,000. The answer is the number of cords or fractions of a cord. Round off the answer to two places past the decimal point.
- Multiply the number of cords by the cost of the wood per cord given on the price list. This gives the retail cost of the wood. This does not include added services, such as special length, transfer or stacking.
- Buyer pays seller and seller conveys "Bill of Sale" to the buyer (Sales invoice example below). Seller "dumps load."

Example of a complete transaction

A buyer wishes to purchase 1-1/2 cords of wood. After reviewing the pricing list, she decides the 20-inch length is acceptable. She tells the seller to dump the wood at the north end of the driveway. She and her husband will transfer the wood to a backyard location and stack it as a weekend project.

The seller arrives with his load on the appointed date. The buyer and seller jointly measure the three dimensions of the load to the closest inch. The load measures as follows:

- $L = 120", W = 120", H = 24"$
- $120 \text{ inches} \times 120 \text{ inches} \times 24 \text{ inches} = 345,600 \text{ in}^3 = \text{Gross volume of load}$
- $345,600 \text{ in}^3 \div 220,000 \text{ in}^3 = 1.57 \text{ cords}$
- $1.57 \text{ cords} \times \$85/\text{cord} = \$133.45$ (retail cost of the cordwood)

The transaction is completed and the seller conveys "Bill of Sale" to the buyer and dumps load of wood.

Wood selling tips

- Do not randomly pile cordwood for measurement purposes. You cannot estimate the volume of a randomly piled load to the needed degree of accuracy. The wood must be tightly stacked and stowed piling.
 - Only sell cords of wood or fractions thereof. A buyer may say he wants a rank of wood. When you ask him how much that is, he may reply "about a half cord." At that point, you should tell him you would prefer to sell a half-cord and proceed with your transaction.
 - Measure pile dimensions in inches (not feet) to the closest full inch. Practice the simple steps in calculating the cord or fractions of a cord to get a fair and measured cost.
 - Non-split pieces (smaller whole round branches) tend to be crooked, and therefore they reduce the net wood volume in a well-stacked pile.
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Example of a sales invoice

ABC Cordwood Supply Company



Sales Invoice

Date: _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Measurements of load of cordwood to nearest inch

Length _____

Width _____

Height _____

Quantity (cords) _____

Price per cord _____

Price of wood _____

Total costs _____

Accessory costs _____

Length adjustment _____

Transfer _____

Stack _____

Total accessory costs _____

Sale \$ _____

Signature _____