

Alaska does not have this type of first response inspection. These trees were not accepted in Hawaii so were sent on to Alaska. Read on.



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM

Agricultural officials inspecting more than 3,100 Oregon-grown Christmas trees aboard a Boeing 747 aircraft yesterday found insects amid the trees. The inspectors included Dennis Nagatani, left, Elliot Nakashima, Edward O'Callaghan, Kanani Lai, scooping up an insect into a collection bottle, and Arseno Esteban. The planeload was returned to the mainland.

Wasp discoveries sting sales

Two schools were planning to sell the trees to raise funds

STORY SUMMARY »

They arrived late Thursday, but the journey wasn't quite over for a planeload of Christmas trees from Portland, Ore., which were intended for Oahu school and church fundraisers.

The 747 jet loaded with 3,150 Douglas, noble and grand firs was sent back to the mainland yesterday after the discovery of several types of wasp, two of which are not found in Hawaii.

The Department of Agriculture said it did not have the proper decontamination facilities for the first large-scale air delivery of Christmas trees to the state, so the plane was rerouted to Anchorage, Alaska.

Five churches and schools and one wholesaler were affected. One of the schools, which planned to sell the trees as a part of a fundraising project, said it stands to lose \$10,000.

McMinnville, Ore.-based cargo shipper Evergreen International Aviation Inc., which handled the shipment, said it will lose \$1 million from the operation.

STAR-BULLETIN

[FULL STORY »](#)

By Jennifer Sudick
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A planeload of Christmas trees intended for sale by isle fundraisers and wholesalers was sent back to the mainland yesterday after the discovery of several types of wasp, two of which are not found in Hawaii.

The Boeing 747, which arrived in Honolulu Thursday night, contained 3,150 Douglas, noble and grand firs, marking the first large-scale air delivery of Christmas trees to the state. Five churches and schools and one wholesaler were affected.

The plane was diverted to Anchorage, Alaska, late yesterday afternoon, said David Rath, president of Evergreen Agricultural Enterprises, a division of McMinnville, Ore.-based cargo shipper Evergreen International Aviation Inc., which handled the shipment.

"We've shipped to Japan, Puerto Rico, Mexico and China and haven't had anything like this happen before," Rath said. "We asked if we could pay a charge or incinerate them there or fumigate them, but they are not allowing any of that. They wouldn't allow us to offload them at all."

Evergreen stands to lose \$1 million from the diversion because the flight had to be rerouted, delaying a scheduled textile shipment out of Asia and incurring additional fuel costs. Rath said the company hopes to sell the trees at cost or give them away in Alaska.

Kailua Christian Academy and Waialua High and Intermediate School had arranged to purchase the largest portion of the trees, said Hollie Spivey, Evergreen's Christmas tree sales manager. Evergreen's aviation and ground logistics unit planned to sell 1,000 trees. Spivey declined to name the other affected buyers. Any money paid to Evergreen for the fundraisers will be refunded, Rath said.

Ben Abraham, an administrator at Kailua Christian Academy, said he purchased 1,300 trees for what was meant to be the school's only fundraiser of the year.

"This was a major fundraiser for our school, and we stand to lose \$10,000," he said.

The school planned to make \$40 to \$60 a tree, he said, with a 6- to 7-foot Douglas fir selling for \$75. He had paid to advertise the fundraiser and for a refrigerated truck to pick the trees up from the airport.

"Most were pre-sold," he said. "We have to refund the funds."

The trees were cut Wednesday at Evergreen's 800-acre tree farm and shipped out of Portland International Airport in Oregon on Thursday.



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These were some of the insects found yesterday during an inspection of Christmas trees.

The Hawaii Department of Agriculture sent a team of 10 inspectors to the plane yesterday morning, where they found three yellow-jacket wasps, including two live queens, along with two other genera of wasps, one tentatively identified as a *dolichovespula*, which was found alive, and a *vespa*, which is a type of hornet. Both are not currently found in Hawaii, said Domingo Cravalho Jr., chief of the state Department of Agriculture's Inspection and Compliance Section, which inspects all imported trees.

"The unusual thing about the entire air shipment was that many of the insects that were found in the air shipment were not found in maritime inspections of Christmas trees," he said.

Evergreen secured a certificate from the Oregon Department of Agriculture clearing the trees, meaning that they were all shaken to remove insects, Cravalho said. "Evidently it wasn't shaken enough, or it was staged in an area where it could get re-infested," he said.

Flies, parasitic wasps and other pests also were found, as well as dirt and rocks that could carry microorganisms, Cravalho said. No trees were removed from the plane during the inspection, he said.

The department was unable to clean the plane because the state's cleaning and inspection facilities are made for surface containers, he said, not large aircraft.

"It's best that the shipment move out of Hawaii and go to another destination that accepts these types of pests," he said. "We're at a greater risk because of the fact that we have warmer weather and some of these species might take hold here."

The majority of the state's 150,000 imported Christmas trees this year are shipped by sea, with the last of four Matson Navigation Co. shipments expected to arrive today.

A Boeing 747-200 can hold up to 4,500 trees, said Spivey, but some buyers backed out after wasps were found on three surface containers last month. Spivey said Evergreen plans to fly Christmas trees to Hawaii next year in containers so they can be removed and dealt with separately.

"We had such a tremendous response," she said, adding that more than a dozen cars were lined up this morning at Evergreen's airport site waiting for a tree. "Phones were ringing off the hook -- that's encouraging."

Detoured trees bring out local kindness



More than 2,000 trees were diverted to Anchorage. (Jason Kohler/KTUU-TV)

by Jill Burke
Sunday, Dec. 2, 2007

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - While many are searching for the perfect Christmas tree, one Oregon-based company is looking for a way to dump thousands of them.

Evergreen International Aviation had a planeload of Oregon trees headed for Hawaii when the Department of Agriculture refused to let them in because an inspector spotted a bug.



Northern Air Cargo C.O.O. David Karp
(Jason Kohler/KTUU-TV)

The 747 wound up in Anchorage and needed to unload more than 2,000 trees.

Evergreen partnered with Northern Air Cargo and came up with an emergency strategy to unload to wayward trees -- team up with ChangePoint Church.

Northern Air Cargo C.O.O. David Karp said the companies will be donating profits to a downtown soup kitchen.

"It's just a good way to get the trees out and do some good," Karp said. "When stuff like this comes along you just make the best out of it. It wasn't the way I planned on spending my weekend but we are having a good time."

The trees range in size from 5 feet to 12 feet tall.

They are being sold for \$40 each through Monday at the Northern Air Cargo facility from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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