

Tips for Safe Disposal of Ash from Fireplaces and Woodstoves

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As the winter season officially arrives, residents are reminded that fireplace and woodstove ashes retain enough heat to ignite other combustible materials for several days after a fire. The rule to remember is: never put ashes in a paper or plastic bag, cardboard box or plastic bucket.

“Embers often concealed in what appears to be cold ashes, can remain hot enough to rekindle a fire for several days,” said Fire Chief Richard Bowers. “We want residents to enjoy their fireplaces, wood stoves and grills but to always take care to dispose of the ashes wisely.”

The Division of Solid Waste Services (Dept. of Environmental Protection) joins the Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service in reminding residents never to put out ashes from fireplaces for collection with their regular household trash unless they have been thoroughly soaked with water in a metal ash bucket with a tight fitting metal lid and designed for that purpose, or held in place for at least a week to ensure there are no residual embers.

Store any container holding ash outside, away from structures, decks, fences, wood piles or other combustible materials. Ashes retain enough heat to ignite other combustible materials for several days after a fire.

“Hot ashes that are not properly cooled and disposed are significant fire hazards, capable of starting fires when mixed in loads of waste in refuse collection trucks, on rail cars on their way to waste disposal facilities or while waste is actually being processed at the County’s Transfer Station,” said Dan Locke, chief of the Division of Solid Waste Services.

MCFRS and DSWS both want residents to be aware that the risk of fire becomes even greater when it is windy. The wind can reignite embers and potentially send them toward nearby combustibles, such as homes.

Two other helpful ash safety hints from MCFRS are: never use a vacuum cleaner to pick up ashes and always have working smoke alarms on every level of the home and test them monthly.

For more information visit the [DSWS website](#).