

Improper disposal of hot ashes could ignite unwanted fire

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is reminding residents to use caution when disposing of woodstove or fireplace ashes. Ashes can remain live and capable of starting a fire for several days, even when they appear to be out.

Last fall, twice people along Pioneer Trail dumped their woodstove ashes onto national forest system lands just beyond their property boundary. Forest Service and Lake Valley fire crews were able to contain the resulting wildfires at less than a quarter acre each. The residents were cited “for negligently placing any material that could start a fire,” which carries a \$350 fine.

They could also have been held responsible for the costs of fire suppression.

“Even when there’s snow on the ground, ashes can retain enough heat to melt through the snow and cause a fire,” Forest Service fire prevention officer Beth Brady said in a statement. “Protect yourself, your neighbors and our forest lands by learning how to properly dispose of ashes.”

Place discarded ashes in a heavy metal container, douse them with water and cover with a fitted metal lid. Store the container outside, away from structures, decks, fences, wood piles and other combustible materials.

Contact your local trash collection agency for their disposal recommendations after ashes have cooled and embers are out.

Never use a vacuum cleaner to pick up ashes.