

Proper ash disposal can prevent unwanted fire

By Teri Mizuhara

All around town we see smoke rising from chimneys, signaling the arrival of fall with crisp days and cold evenings.

If you have a wood burning stove or fireplace, you know the drill well as you find yourself scraping out the old ashes that have accumulated as you burn firewood to heat your home.

If you properly dispose of the ashes from your fireplace or wood burning stove and place them in a metal can, you won't risk burning your property or that of your neighbors.

"Can your ashes" means when you clean your fireplace or wood burning stove make sure you place the hot ashes into a metal can or container so you can safely transport them outside.

Proper ash disposal tips:

- When cleaning your fireplace or wood stove, always place your ashes in a metal container, never use a paper or plastic bag or cardboard box.
- Put the metal container outside and immediately pour water into the can to cool any hot embers. Coals or pieces of wood can smolder for days.
- Stir the water into the ashes with a stick, making sure everything is cold.
- Cover the container with a lid and store the metal container away from flammable materials.
- If you vacuum your ashes it is critical that you make sure you use an appropriate "ash vacuum" which is specially designed to hold hot and cold embers. Never, ever use your regular home vacuum.
- Never place ashes from your wood burning stove in your

garbage can as they will catch your garbage can on fire.

Teri Mizuhara works for the Amador-El Dorado unit of CalFire.