

What's the Risk?

Woodstove/Fireplace Hot Ashes



THE ISSUE

A by-product of using any solid-fuel-burning appliance such as a woodstove, furnace, or fireplace, is ash. A general rule when cleaning ash is to wait at least 48 hours after the last fire to remove the ashes allowing them to cool.



WHAT'S THE RISK?

There is a possibility that hot coals or other heated remnants will remain in the ash. Since the ash must periodically be removed for the appliance to operate properly, when it is, the ash should be stored in a metal container with a firmly-fitted lid. Once the solid fuel appliance is fully cleaned, the ash should immediately be taken outside and left to sit inside the metal container for at least 48 hours to cool. Ash left in a container without a lid can be ignited by a small breeze or wind blowing over the top of the container. The sparks and flames created, could, in turn, ignite nearby combustible materials. Numerous fires have occurred due to ash pails being left near combustibles or on wooden decks.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Fire services personnel or WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) trained insurance staff offer the following advice.

1. Leave ash pails outside on a non-combustible surface with at least 20 feet/6 metres of clearance to any combustible material.
2. Never leave ash pails in a home to cool, they should always be stored outside.
3. Ensure ash pails have a tight-fitting lid that is not easily blown off.
4. Never remove or store ash in a plastic pail.
5. Never store ash pails inside a garage or carport.
6. Once the ash has cooled, slowly dump the ash out of the ash pail but continue to look for hot embers. Any coals which appear to be hot should be doused with water.

