Cheltenham Fire Company has been dispatched to extinguish multiple house fires caused by improperly disposed of fireplace ashes within the last month. The disposal of fireplace ashes is a serious and ongoing problem and one of the major causes of house fires. When the weather is cold outside, a warm cozy fire is delightful, but once the fire is put out, many people simply scoop up their ashes and deposit them into their plastic trash container in the garage. After a few hours in the plastic trash container, the ashes have ignited the trash container and suddenly the garage and house are on fire. This simple action has turned many memories of a delightful, cozy evening fire into a disaster.

NEVER store or dispose of hot ashes in a combustible plastic trash container. Ashes can hold enough heat to ignite a combustible plastic container up to several days later.

The following tips might sound simple, but they can save your house, your family, and your life if you use them to help you dispose of fireplace ashes safely:

1. DO NOT remove hot ashes from the fireplace immediately. Wait up to 2-3 days and let the ashes cool completely in the fireplace until there are no remaining hot embers before removing them.

2. NEVER put fireplace ashes in a combustible plastic trash container because it can easily ignite. If you have to remove the ashes from the fireplace before they are completely cool, put the ashes and remaining hot embers in a metal bucket. Move the bucket outside the house and garage and well away from anything that is combustible.

3. ONLY put fireplace ashes in your combustible plastic trash container when they are completely cool and after you have put your trash container out on the street for trash pickup.

These are 3 simple steps that can prevent unnecessary inconvenience or tragedy. If your household uses a wood or coal burning fireplace it is equally important to have your chimney inspected and cleaned annually by a professional.