



Fire officials vow harsh penalties for acts of arson

STAFF REPORT (online@rgj.com)

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Truckee Meadows fire officials will impose severe penalties on those who start fires in the surrounding hills and ravines.

"This is a difficult fire season," said Kurt Latipow, Washoe County fire services coordinator. "If a fire is intentionally set, we will bring every power to bear for prosecution."

Area fire officials also are recommending several changes in local ordinances.

- **Shake roofs:** Elwood Miller, founding director of the Nevada Fire Safe Council and a retired forestry professor, is recommending the county crack down on people with wooden shake roofs. An old shake roof is like having a ton of kindling overhead.

"It's a threat to every other house in the community," Miller said.

While new shake roofs are outlawed, the county has several hundred homes with old shake roofs.

In Incline Village, the fire department requires people to replace shake roofs with a fire resistant material if they need a building permit requiring more than 25 percent of the roof to be repaired.

- **Defensible space:** Fire officials are pushing for new landscaping ordinances that would tell subdivision developers what they can plant in the yards of new homes to create defensible space against wildfires. Junipers planted next to homes are a big worry.

The plants are extremely flammable, a trait that earned them the nickname "tall green gas cans."

- **Clearing brush:** Marty Scheuerman, Reno fire division chief, wants ordinances to require property owners to remove fire hazards such as brush, overgrown weeds and other debris.

Latipow said educating real estate agents about defensible space techniques should be on fire department agendas.

He said agents could alert homeowners to problem areas and act as "another set of eyes" for fire prevention officials.