



**Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Proposed Approach**  
Annual Work Plan: July 2024 - July 2025  
Kensington Fire Protection District

The following recommendations are based on the KFPD Emergency Preparedness Work Plan and how the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator can assist in the development and execution of the Work Plan in coordination with the Kensington Fire District Board, the El Cerrito Kensington Fire Department, the Emergency Preparedness Committee, KFPD Staff and Consultants, Kensington Police Department, neighboring agencies and partnering organizations, and community members.

**1. Develop and Distribute the Evacuation Plan Package to all residents.**

*Objective: Ensure all residents are aware of evacuation routes and prepared for emergencies. Expand on the campaign and continue tailoring the information to the residents' needs.*

**The "Evacuation is Your Responsibility" campaign will launch in June 2024**

Materials will be distributed to all Kensington households via USPS. The campaign will be mentioned at all public events in the future and the theme for the 2024 National Night Out Block Parties.

**Red Flag parking should be the next coordinated campaign with Kensington Police**

Focus on parking the car in the direction of travel on Red Flag Days, knowing how to open a garage door manually when the power is out, and checking with neighbors who may need assistance before evacuating.

**Residents are asking for parking changes to be made on critical streets.**

Certain streets are problematic and will negatively impact traffic flow during an emergency. Streets such as St. Albans, Windsor, and York were included in a plan for permanent street parking changes and should be proposed to KPD and the County to execute these changes. The Emergency Preparedness Coordinator can facilitate Neighborhood Emergency Block Parties, public messaging, and community organization when the County and Police are ready to implement the changes.

Residents must understand the dynamics of an evacuation as Kensington's crowded, narrow streets pose challenges for first responders traveling toward the ridgeline. Kensington has an aging population with several residents experiencing mobility challenges and other medical diagnoses that will make an urgent evacuation difficult. Pre-evacuation, preparedness, and practicing evacuation exercises are recommendations embraced by neighboring agencies and are also recommended by CAL Fire, as noted in the Subdivision Review.

## **2. Assist in developing a good relationship and planning with East Bay Regional Park District to address fire concerns with Tilden Park.**

*Objective: Enhance fire safety related to Tilden Park and Kensington risks through meaningful collaboration with East Bay Regional Park District. Celebrate the collective accomplishments and inform the community of the work to improve public awareness.*

In recent KFPD Board meetings, Kensington residents and East Bay Regional Park District provided information regarding work accomplished in areas of concern adjacent to Kensington. EBRPD detailed the challenges they face with resource conservation and wildfire mitigation and noted that Kensington residents have a right of entry for volunteer work that has been done over the last few decades.

Wildcat Firewise and Maybeck Firewise have hosted several walks focused on evacuation routes, home hardening, and vegetation management in the last year. Expanding on this concept to collaborate with East Bay Regional Park District to do guided walks in treated areas will inform the community and allow residents to experience firsthand the challenges East Bay Regional Parks faces with balancing ecology and wildfire mitigation.

The question was asked, “What can Kensington (KFPD) do to help in this partnership?”

### **Improve access to material resources for home hardening**

Moraga Orinda Fire has a grant program for ember-resistant vent screens and Gutter Guards for residents to reduce the risk of home ignition. A similar program should be adopted in Kensington to improve community wildfire resilience.

### **Adopt a more aggressive hazardous vegetation removal program.**

The 2024 Replanting Grant program revealed the challenges residents experience in removing hazardous vegetation. Projects were extended due to some applicants' difficulty before the replanting portion could begin for qualified reimbursement. A program focusing on reimbursement for the removal instead of the replacement will expedite the removal of hazardous plants in the community.

### **Explore the feasibility of establishing a Kensington Fire Safe Council**

Diablo Fire Safe Council oversees both Contra Costa County and Alameda County. As a result, the funds and programs available to Kensington are scarce. A feasibility study should be done to understand the benefits of establishing a Fire Safe Council dedicated to the needs of Kensington and how grant awards can positively impact KFPD objectives.

### **Increase the establishment of Firewise communities with additional resources.**

As Firewise communities grow, additional support will be needed to maintain and assist in their program objectives. The Fire District can provide grants for Firewise communities for specific initiatives or public engagement activities. Residents often ask about the benefits of establishing a Firewise community. Outside of the possible insurance premium

discounts and community building, the Fire District has an opportunity to create incentives and benefits for Firewise at a local level.

**Coordinate with groups that have actively worked in EBRPD-responsible areas**

Residents working for decades with EBRPD along the park boundary have received financial support from donations or grants provided by Diablo Fire Safe Council. The Fire District must learn more about what has been done by these groups and how to lower the barrier to accomplish the work being allowed by EBRPD.

**Calculate and track the volunteer work being done by Kensington residents in EBRPD**

Use the Firewise reporting method to capture all work in EBRPD and use this information when applying for grants. Provide this information to the community so residents can better understand what is being accomplished, encourage them to do their part at home, and report their activities.

**3. Establish a small subcommittee to interact with the Emergency Preparedness Committee, the Fire Chief, and the Police Chief to determine what form of CERT Kensington can build now, given resources and capabilities that can evolve.**

*Objective: Build a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) tailored to Kensington's needs and recruit members willing to train, instruct, and conduct drills frequently to improve disaster readiness in Kensington and across the broader East Bay.*

The Emergency Preparedness coordinator supports CERT objectives by promoting programs within Kensington, such as the CERT training course and the water storage and fire extinguisher sales.

There is a need for increased coordination with surrounding agencies and CERT program managers to boost CERT capabilities across the region. Albany has established a non-profit to structure its CERT organization. This coordination will ensure Kensington is a stakeholder in region-wide planning and development of volunteers. A large-scale disaster will impact the broader region. Kensington CERT should be well positioned to provide not only local assistance but also assistance to other communities. Building these relationships and training across the region improves on-scene performance.

Volunteer recruitment is critical for CERT, and the Fire District can benefit from the same group of volunteers for other operational needs that align with its objectives.

**Assist CERT with an outreach campaign for recruitment**

Develop a visual social media-based campaign focusing on active response, what prospective CERT trainees would expect to learn, and what they would be called to do. Recruit individuals by producing content based on the program's needs. For example, if CERT requires medically trained personnel, produce a campaign specific to that subject

to capture the attention of volunteers with medical experience or residents aspiring to learn more about medical care and disaster preparedness.

**Assist CERT organizers with community outreach and engagement.**

To retain volunteers, it is vital to build relationships and create an environment of teamwork with a sense of purpose. There must be more than the generic templated CERT program to sustain a community-based volunteer program. Kensington CERT needs restructuring and rebranding and can benefit from more social engagement and team-building activities involving youth events outside of meetings and required training.

**4. Develop and promote specific action items for House Hardening to citizens (e.g., fire screens, etc.)**

*Objective: Through education and material resources, improve the fire resilience of homes in Kensington to prevent ignition from wildland ember storms or radiant heat from house fires within the community.*

The Spring 2024 Edition of The Fire Plug included a Home Hardening Checklist mailed to all homes in Kensington. El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Department's Prevention Division reviewed and approved this checklist.

**Revamp the Hazardous Plant Removal Program**

The Replanting Grant is under review to improve effectiveness and shorten project timelines. As previously stated, residents participating in this program needed help working through the removal before getting to the replanting portion of the program. This program should only focus on removal to meet the district's objectives effectively.

**Implement A Home Hardening Grant Program**

Adopt a program like Moraga Orinda Fire's Home Hardening Grant Program, which provides qualifying residents with ember-resistant vent screens and Gutter Guards.

**5. Determine next steps for Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRADs)**

*Objective: Enhancing community alert systems with LRADs will require building a public awareness campaign informing residents of the different alerts, communications, and capabilities.*

**Working closely with Contra Costa County CWS to develop an awareness campaign.**

Collaborate with CWS on talking points to educate the public of any changes/additions to alerting infrastructure when those technologies are installed. Develop a campaign and distribute information to the community through publications, social media, emergency preparedness meetings, and other print media channels.

**Facilitate Townhall Meetings or Other Preparedness Events**

Support the General Manager’s directive to plan and host townhalls or other meetings to distribute information and publications to the community related to LRADs.

**6. Develop a volunteer program guide and resources. (The District should develop a BOD policy to cover volunteer activities.)**

*Objective: Establish a robust volunteer program to create a sustainable model for implementing and maintaining emergency preparedness initiatives in Kensington.*

Kensington Fire Protection District has an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of implementing emergency preparedness initiatives in the community by leveraging volunteers.

**Develop a pathway for volunteers to learn about the district’s mission and objectives.**

Assist the Kensington Fire Protection District by designing emergency preparedness initiatives that engage the community and allow volunteers to participate, learn, and engage the public. Create an inclusive program that caters to the interests of volunteers and the community’s needs.

**Pending an official volunteer program, manage volunteer activities at the following:**

- The Paper Shredding Event
- Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Block Parties
- National Night Out
- Public Presentations
- Firewise Community Events
- CERT Events / Trainings

**7. Assess the feasibility of an evacuation drill or tabletop exercise in coordination with the Fire Chief and Police Chief.**

*Objective: Improve community readiness for evacuations.*

A public awareness campaign for an evacuation drill was created for the April 2022 Kensington Evacuation Drill. This campaign can be easily redeployed when Kensington Police and Kensington Fire have the staffing resources and mutual aid agencies available to participate.

Surrounding agencies have attempted Evacuation Drills, and the turnout could have been more favorable. It is vital to do a robust public awareness campaign to engage the public and build a survey to collect preparedness data and feedback from resident participants to improve public awareness campaigns and learn more about the experiences from a resident’s perspective that the agencies may not consider. In 2022, we collected feedback and data which determined which areas of preparedness to focus on in subsequent campaigns and public events. During the

summer of 2022, the Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Block Party initiative was launched, and data collection through a short survey was done on a localized level. Consistently, around 60% of residents did not have a family communication or shelter plan for emergencies. This became the focus of the “Evacuation is Your Responsibility” campaign to improve this area of preparedness.

In the absence of a drill or exercise, simulations can be conducted on a block-to-block level during Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Block Parties. The “Evacuation is Your Responsibility” campaign was created as a workaround to staffing challenges that hindered the planning of a community evacuation drill.

Residents want to engage in meaningful exercises/drills. Tabletop exercises might need to include a critical component, public engagement. A more accessible tabletop drill will increase the public’s understanding of each public safety agency’s roles and capabilities.

**Conduct the tabletop exercise over Zoom.**

Program opportunities for the public to participate in a survey or poll during the tabletop exercise.

**Deploy a test signal with a link to “check-in”**

Coordinate with CWS to conduct an annual test to boost alert registration, coordinating this with a campaign and tabletop exercise. Conduct a data-collecting survey to update Kensington's preparedness metrics for continuous improvement.

**Stage a scene with an Engine and cars crowding a street**

Simulate the problem of an evacuation on a local level in a controlled setting to illustrate the problem of Kensington’s crowded, narrow streets. Record/photograph this for a public awareness campaign or provide this through the Zoom tabletop Livestream.