



EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

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DATE: January 18, 2023
TO: Mary Morris-Mayorga: Interim General Manager
FROM: Eric Saylor: Fire Chief
RE: **Fire Chief's Report for the January 2023 Fire District Board Meeting**

Operations

The El Cerrito-Kensington fire department (ECKFD) continues to provide constant services to the Kensington community from temporary station 65 in the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkley parking lot on Craft Avenue, Station 71 at 10900 San Pablo, and Station 72 at 1520 Arlington Blvd. The Kensington community receives mutual aid from Berkeley, Albany, and Richmond Fire departments.

Administration

BLS Ambulances

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (CCCYPD) plans on staffing Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances in 2023. There is a shortage of paramedics in the state, and CCCYPD intends to run some BLS ambulances in place of Advanced Life Support (ALS). CCCYPD is the transportation provider for Kensington, and the potential downgrade from ALS to BLS ambulances will drastically impact our community. Fire administration monitors the situation closely while working with the Local Emergency Medical Authority and the State Emergency Medical Authority. The shortage of paramedics and the increase in ambulance patient offload time (APOT) at hospitals present a significant challenge to all fire departments. Fire administration is considering potential contingencies to ensure quality patient care, including telehealth, positioning an ambulance at St 65, and collaboration with Berkley Fire.

Fire Hazard Severity Report

Cal Fire updated its fire hazard severity zones (FHSZ) map in 2022. Public Resource Code 4201-4204 directs Cal fire to map State Responsibility Areas (SRA) and affected areas based on fuel loading, slope, and fire weather. In 2023, Cal Fire is considering including Local Response Areas (LRA) in its severity zones. Including LRAs in the severity zones will impact Kensington but will likely affect its neighboring communities more. This increase in severity zones will likely increase the use of Office of Emergency Services (OES) funded prepositioned strike teams during the summer months. ECKFD is monitoring the situation closely and collaborating with neighboring agencies.

Vegetation Inspections

ECKFD continues its residential inspections for compliance with the District's Vegetation Management Policy. State Law requires compliance in "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones" at all times; Annual grasses and weeds must always be maintained to 4" to 6". Cutting or mowing short dry grass is much safer than waiting until it is 2' or taller and dry. The District's and Cal Fire's websites provide information on safe practices around the home to create a safe environment.

Training

ECKFD initiated training for the behavioral health unit and peer support group. The training will occur during the course of 2023 and includes classes on group and individual crisis intervention, advanced group crisis intervention, and suicide prevention/intervention/postvention. Suicide continues to be one of the leading causes of death in the service, and the El Cerrito-Kensington fire department is taking action to support its firefighters.

Citizen Engagement

ECKFD started reviewing the current FEMA curriculum to rebuild a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in the community. The department will actively seek Team leaders, Section leaders, and Volunteers. The goals for 2023 are to include CERT members in the earthquake, active shooter, firefighter survival, incident command, and wildfire drills. CERT members will regularly operate out of Station 65 and assist with emergency planning and response.