



EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

10900 San Pablo Avenue • El Cerrito • CA • 94530
(510) 215-4450 • FAX (510) 232-4917



www.el-cerrito.org

DATE: October 1, 2026
TO: Board of Directors, Kensington Fire Protection District
FROM: Eric Saylors, Fire Chief
RE: Fire Chief's Report, October 2026

Seasonal Wildfire Risk: October Remains a Critical Month

October is typically one of the most hazardous months of the year for wildfire in Kensington and the East Bay hills. By this point, vegetation has spent months drying since the last significant spring rains, and grasses, brush, and other fuels are often at or near their driest seasonal condition. When this prolonged dry period overlaps with low humidity and strong offshore winds, a small ignition can become a rapidly spreading wildfire. This combination; not simply hot weather is what makes the late dry season especially dangerous.¹

October often represents the final stretch of our local dry season before more consistent fall and winter rains arrive. However, rainfall does not follow a fixed calendar, and cooler weather alone does not end fire danger. Our readiness must remain tied to actual fuel conditions, meaningful rainfall, and weather forecasts rather than an assumed end date for fire season.^{1,2}

The Eaton and Palisades fires in Southern California in early January 2025 demonstrate why this matters. Exceptionally dry fall and early-winter conditions allowed vegetation to remain critically dry well beyond the usual start of the rainy season. When powerful Santa Ana winds developed, the region still had the fuels and weather conditions needed for destructive, fast-moving fires. The lesson for Kensington is clear: the arrival of winter does not eliminate wildfire danger when the landscape remains dry.²

El Niño Storm Preparedness and Additional Staffing

On September 21, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency to strengthen California's preparation for the developing El Niño season. The declaration directs state agencies to stage resources, protect infrastructure, and support local preparations for flooding, landslides, and other severe-weather impacts. This is an early preparedness action, not a guarantee of any particular storm or rainfall total in Kensington.³

This preparation is particularly important for Kensington. Our steep hillsides include areas of unstable ground and historic landslide deposits, and the community lies along the Hayward Fault. Heavy or prolonged rainfall can saturate soil and increase the potential for slope failure. The fault presents an additional, separate seismic hazard. The Department will pay close attention to rainfall intensity, accumulation over successive storms, soil saturation, and reports of ground movement or compromised access.^{4,5}

As significant storms are forecast, we anticipate the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) will again authorize additional fire engines and command resources through its prepositioning program, consistent with past practice. Individual deployments depend on the forecasted threat and Cal OES approval; the emergency declaration does not automatically activate local staffing. Cal OES covers the approved, eligible costs of these authorized deployments, subject to program requirements and documentation.⁶

Locally, this additional staffing depends on firefighters volunteering to work extra shifts so we can place more apparatus and personnel on duty. Our firefighters have consistently demonstrated a willingness to accept these assignments. Their commitment allows the Department to increase response capacity during periods of elevated risk.



EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

10900 San Pablo Avenue • El Cerrito • CA • 94530
(510) 215-4450 • FAX (510) 232-4917



www.el-cerrito.org

In the past, we have prioritized the housing of supplemental firefighters and an additional chief at Station 55 in Kensington because Kensington is our highest-threat area. The Department is now preparing Station 52 to accommodate these additional personnel. The City of El Cerrito has made a concerted effort to ensure if OES funds addition units that they can kept locally, so the gym equipment at Station 52 has been relocated, and additional beds have been placed in the former gym space to support extra apparatus crews and battalion-chief staffing when authorized.

Housing these resources in Kensington would remain preferable because it places them directly within the highest-threat area. However, Station 52 provides the additional sleeping capacity needed to support extended staffing. This preparation positions the Department to make use of available surge resources when severe weather warrants them.

Regional Coordination on the “Leave Early” Initiative

For more than four years, Chief Sprague of the Berkeley Fire Department and I have been working to advance a coordinated Leave Early approach across Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The ongoing discussion focuses on how neighboring agencies can issue consistent requests for residents to leave high-risk areas before a fire starts during periods of extreme fire weather.

The purpose is to reduce the number of people who may need to evacuate after an ignition. Voluntary early departures can reduce pressure on hillside roads, preserve access for responding fire apparatus, and move people away from the potential threat before conditions deteriorate. A Leave Early recommendation is a precautionary action before a fire starts; it does not replace official evacuation warnings or orders if an emergency develops.⁷

Kensington has already taken important steps, including coordination to ensure Hilltop School is not open to students during designated extreme fire-weather conditions. This work reflects the same principle: reducing the number of people in a high-risk area before an emergency is safer than relying entirely on evacuation after a fire has begun.

Our next step is to continue working with neighboring agencies and both counties toward consistent decision-making criteria, timing, and public messaging for Leave Early requests. The objective is a coordinated regional approach that gives residents time to act, reduces the load on evacuation routes, and protects lives before a fast-moving wildfire threatens the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Saylor

Fire Chief, El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Department

Selected References

1. National Weather Service, San Francisco Bay Area. Historic Fire Weather Conditions during October 2019.
2. NOAA Climate.gov. The weather and climate influences on the January 2025 fires around Los Angeles (February 19, 2025).
3. Office of the Governor. Statewide El Niño preparedness emergency announcement (September 21, 2026).
4. U.S. Geological Survey. Landslide Types and Processes, Fact Sheet 2004-3072.
5. Kensington Fire Protection District. Essential Services Building preliminary fault investigation (January 31, 2018), pp. 2–5.
6. Cal OES. California State Mutual Aid Pre-Incident Preparedness Guideline (January 2026), pp. 4–8.
7. City of Berkeley. Fire Weather and Evacuation: guidance on leaving before a fire starts during Extreme Fire Weather.

Kensington Fire Service Activity

February 2026 | Kensington incidents and Station 55 service

30	48	00:16:16	88.89%
Kensington incidents	Station 55 engine incidents	Kensington 90th PSAP-to-arrival	Station 55 reliability in Kensington

Station 55 Engine Deployment

Unit	All scenes	Kensington	El Cerrito	Other
E155 - Type 1 engine	48	27	19	2
E355 - Type 3 engine	0	0	0	0
Station 55 engines combined	48	27	19	2

Other scene locations: Richmond: 1, Unspecified: 1.

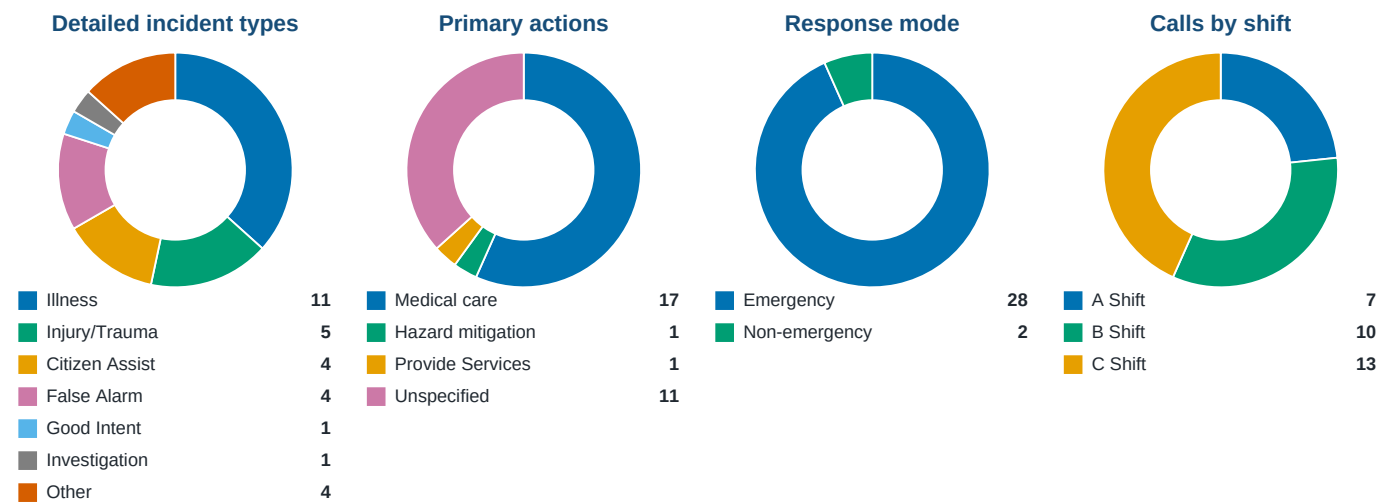
Station 55 Response Time by Scene Location

Scene location	Engine incidents	Time recorded	Median PSAP-to-arrival	90th PSAP-to-arrival
Kensington	27	27/27	00:06:07	00:16:24
El Cerrito	19	18/19	00:05:48	00:09:09
Other	2	2/2	00:13:22	00:15:29
All Station 55 incidents	48	47/48	00:06:04	00:14:02

Kensington Calls by Category

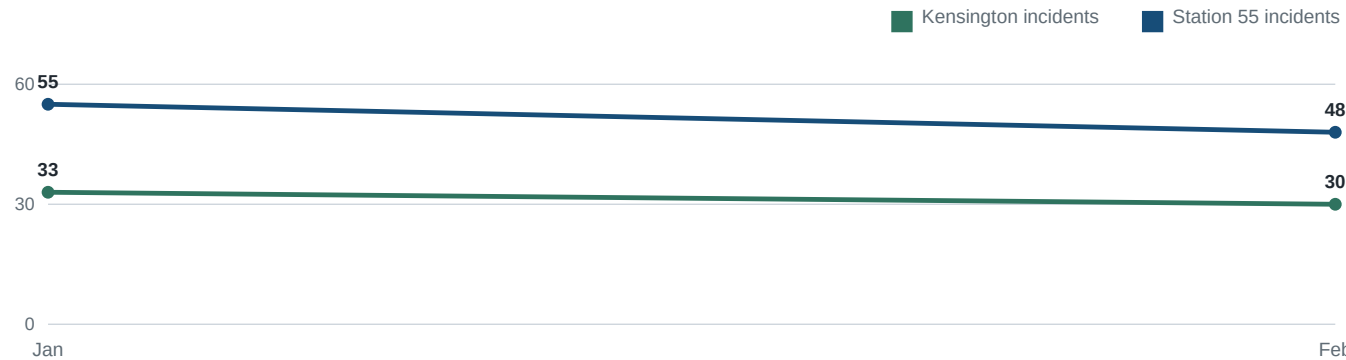
Category	Count	Share
Fire	0	0%
Medical	16	53.33%
Rescue	1	3.33%
Hazardous Situation	2	6.67%
Public Service	6	20%
No Emergency	5	16.67%

Kensington Incident Detail

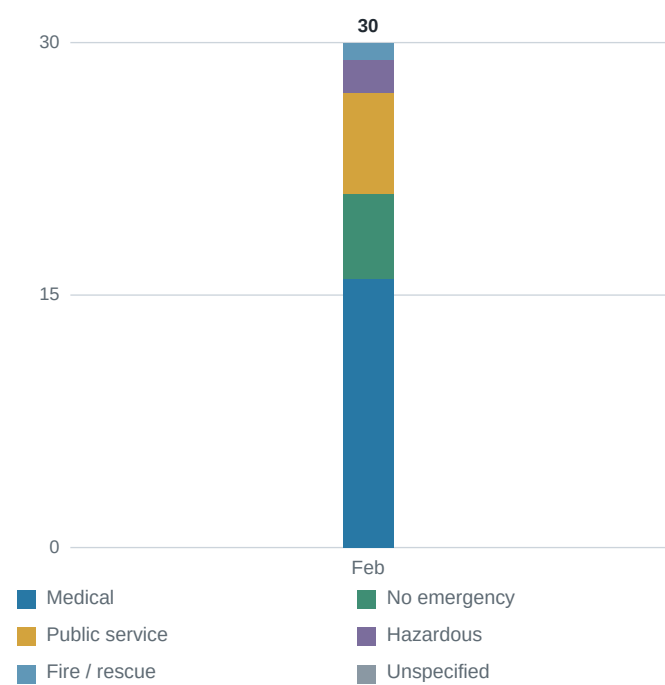


"Other" combines the remaining low-frequency categories.

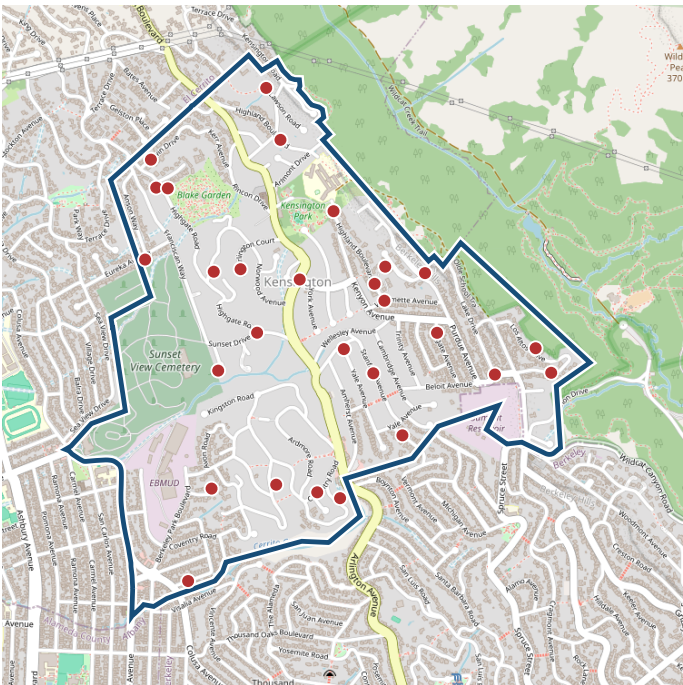
Recent Monthly Activity



Kensington Category Trend



Kensington Incident Locations



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors; boundary from Contra Costa County -K zoning data

Non-Kensington Incidents for EC-K Fire Department

Group	Location or assignment	Incidents	Station reliability	Response records	90th PSAP-to-arrival
El Cerrito	Station 55 primary incidents	13	92.31%	13/13	00:09:34
El Cerrito	Stations 51/52 primary incidents	156	89.1%	137/156	00:08:24
EC subtotal	All El Cerrito incidents	169		150/169	00:08:27
Other	Non-EC-K Station 55 response	2		2/2	00:15:29
Other	Non-EC-K Stations 51/52 only	40		29/40	00:10:08
Other	Non-EC-K station unspecified	4		4/4	00:08:09
Other subtotal	All non-EC-K locations	46		35/46	00:11:35
Non-K total	All non-Kensington incidents	215		185/215	00:08:41

Station 55 participated in 7 non-Kensington incidents assigned to Stations 51/52.

Other locations: Richmond 41, San Pablo 2, Unspecified 2, Rodeo 1.

Reading the Measures

Station reliability is the share of incidents assigned to Station 55 where either E155 or E355 appears among the responding units.
PSAP-to-arrival is the time from when the call is received at dispatch until the first responding unit arrives at the scene.

Kensington Fire Service Activity

March 2026 | Kensington incidents and Station 55 service

43	61	00:11:38	86.84%
Kensington incidents	Station 55 engine incidents	Kensington 90th PSAP-to-arrival	Station 55 reliability in Kensington

Station 55 Engine Deployment

Unit	All scenes	Kensington	El Cerrito	Other
E155 - Type 1 engine	60	33	26	1
E355 - Type 3 engine	1	1	0	0
Station 55 unique incidents	61	34	26	1

Other scene locations: Unspecified: 1.

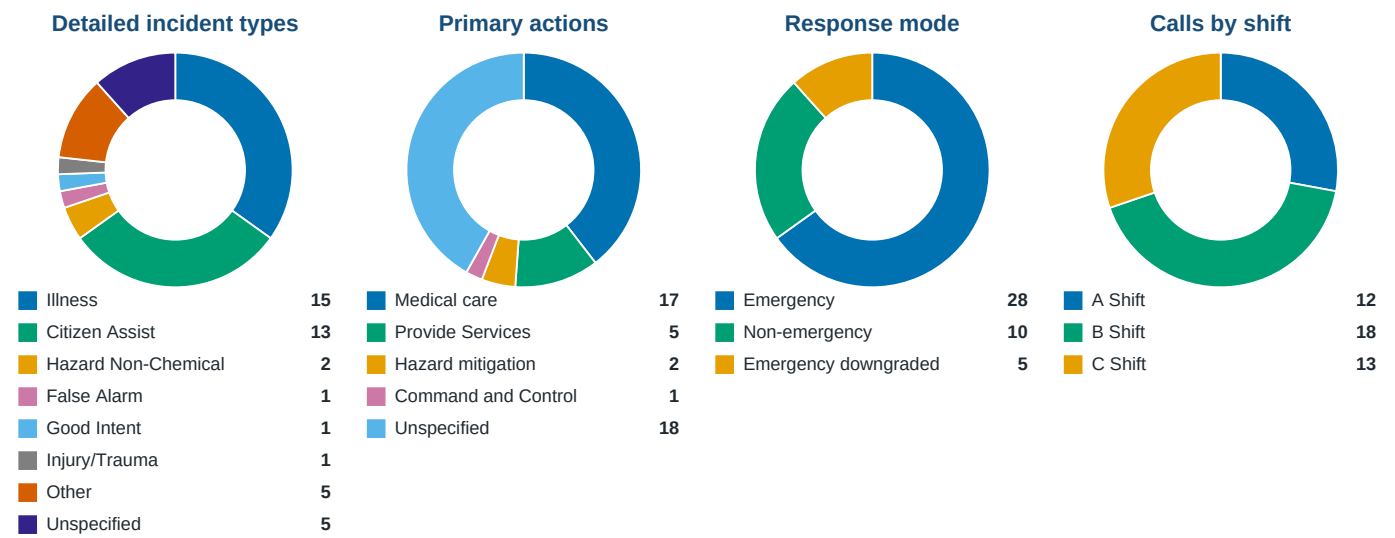
Station 55 Response Time by Scene Location

Scene location	Engine incidents	Time recorded	Median PSAP-to-arrival	90th PSAP-to-arrival
Kensington	34	31/34	00:06:23	00:12:04
El Cerrito	26	24/26	00:07:25	00:10:25
Other	1	0/1	N/P	N/P
All Station 55 incidents	61	55/61	00:06:35	00:11:04

Kensington Calls by Category

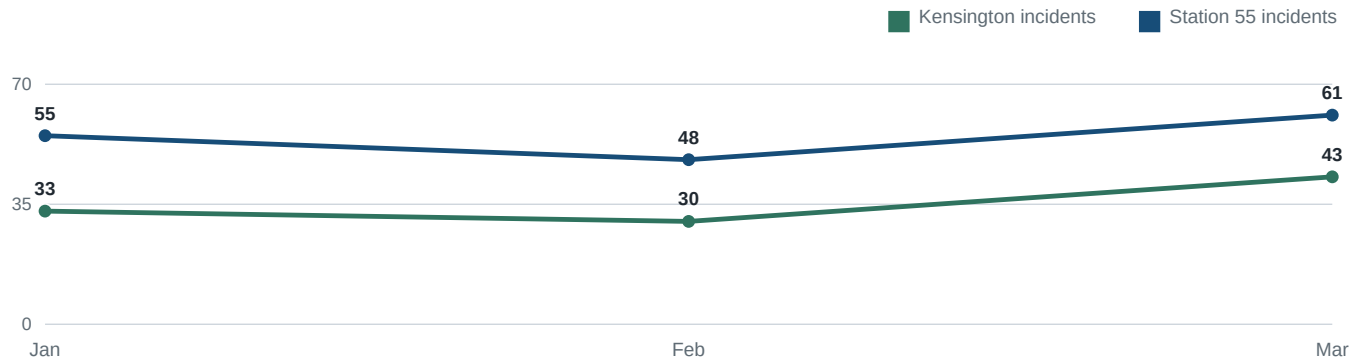
Category	Count	Share
Fire	0	0%
Medical	16	37.21%
Rescue	0	0%
Hazardous Situation	5	11.63%
Public Service	15	34.88%
No Emergency	7	16.28%

Kensington Incident Detail

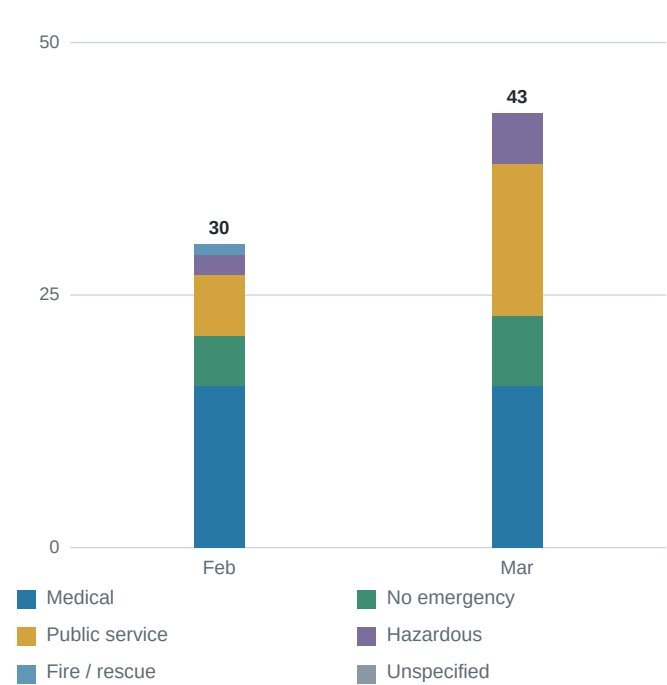


"Other" combines the remaining low-frequency categories.

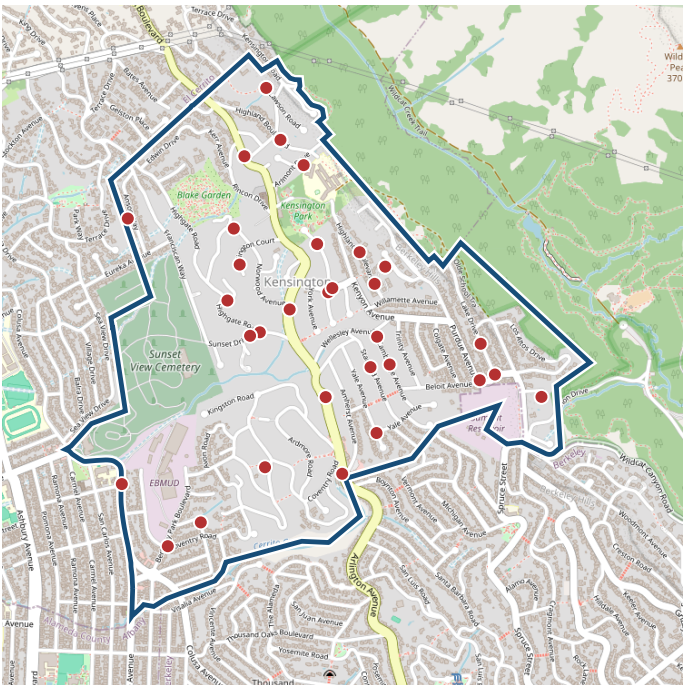
Recent Monthly Activity



Kensington Category Trend



Kensington Incident Locations



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors; boundary from Contra Costa County -K zoning data

Non-Kensington Incidents for EC-K Fire Department

Group	Location or assignment	Incidents	Station reliability	Response records	90th PSAP-to-arrival
El Cerrito	Station 55 primary incidents	20	95%	20/20	00:09:44
El Cerrito	Stations 51/52 primary incidents	172	93.02%	161/172	00:08:54
EC subtotal	All El Cerrito incidents	193		182/193	00:09:12
Other	Non-EC-K Station 55 response	1		0/1	N/P
Other	Non-EC-K Stations 51/52 only	55		37/55	00:09:38
Other	Non-EC-K station unspecified	4		4/4	00:11:04
Other subtotal	All non-EC-K locations	60		41/60	00:10:26
Non-K total	All non-Kensington incidents	253		223/253	00:09:32

Station 55 participated in 7 non-Kensington incidents assigned to Stations 51/52.

Other locations: Richmond 54, San Pablo 3, El Sobrante 1, Pinole 1, Unspecified 1.

Reading the Measures

Station reliability is the share of incidents assigned to Station 55 where either E155 or E355 appears among the responding units.

PSAP-to-arrival is the time from when the call is received at dispatch until the first responding unit arrives at the scene.

Kensington Fire Service Activity

April 2026 | Kensington incidents and Station 55 service

39	54	00:11:02	81.58%
Kensington incidents	Station 55 engine incidents	Kensington 90th PSAP-to-arrival	Station 55 reliability in Kensington

Station 55 Engine Deployment

Unit	All scenes	Kensington	El Cerrito	Other
E155 - Type 1 engine	54	32	19	3
E355 - Type 3 engine	0	0	0	0
Station 55 unique incidents	54	32	19	3

Other scene locations: Orinda: 3.

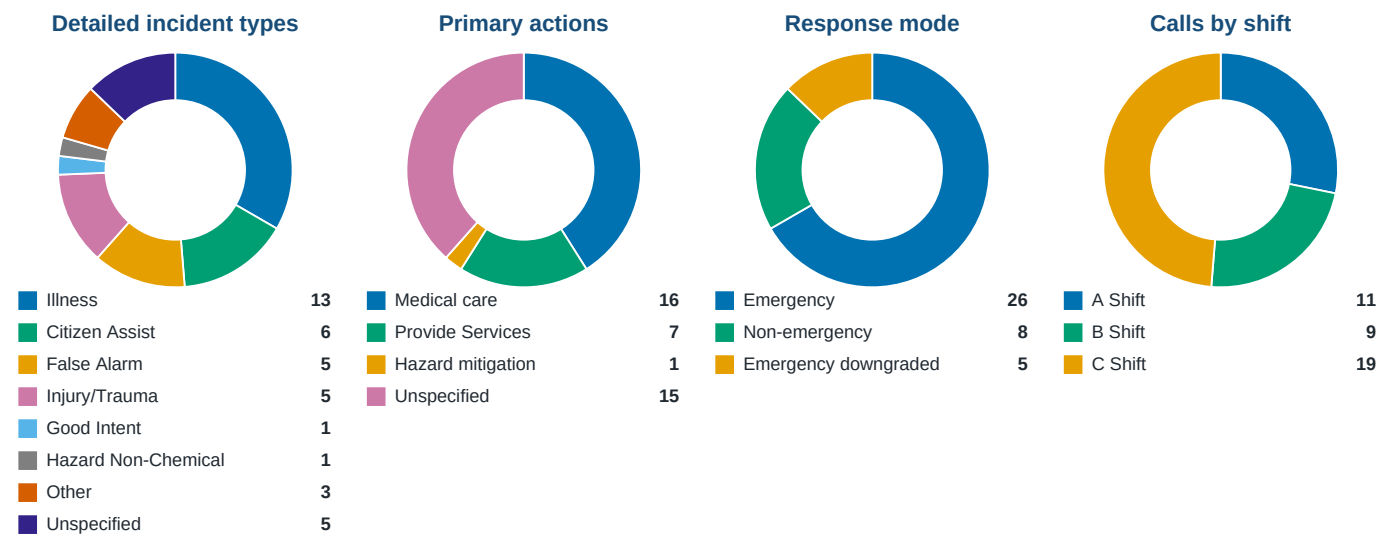
Station 55 Response Time by Scene Location

Scene location	Engine incidents	Time recorded	Median PSAP-to-arrival	90th PSAP-to-arrival
Kensington	32	30/32	00:06:20	00:11:16
El Cerrito	19	17/19	00:07:11	00:10:10
Other	3	0/3	N/P	N/P
All Station 55 incidents	54	47/54	00:06:28	00:11:19

Kensington Calls by Category

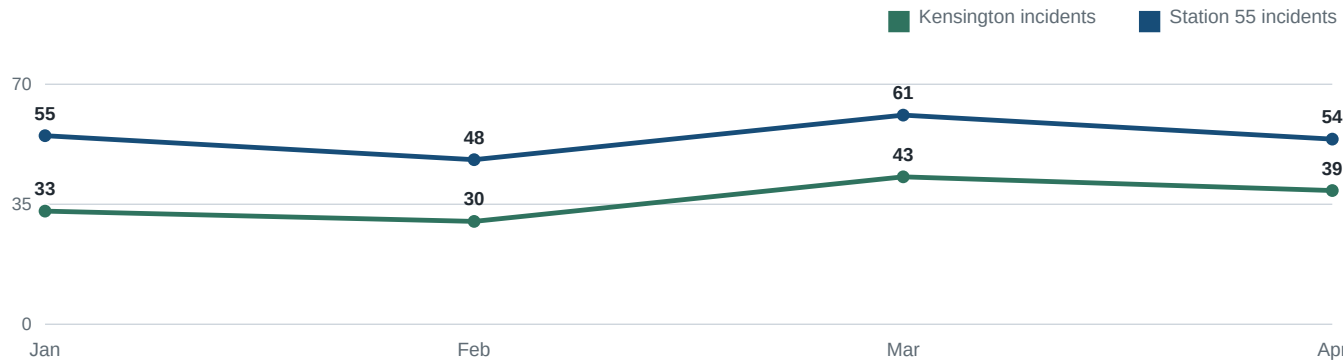
Category	Count	Share
Fire	0	0%
Medical	18	46.15%
Rescue	1	2.56%
Hazardous Situation	2	5.13%
Public Service	7	17.95%
No Emergency	11	28.21%

Kensington Incident Detail

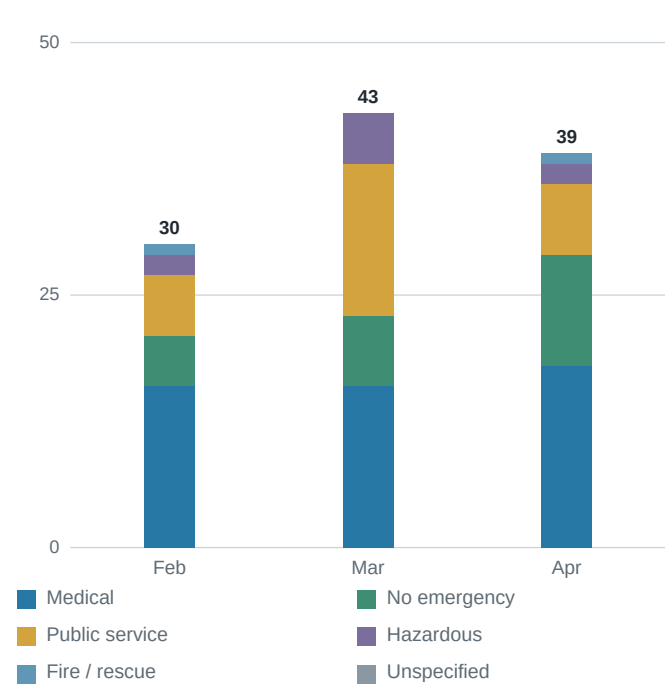


"Other" combines the remaining low-frequency categories.

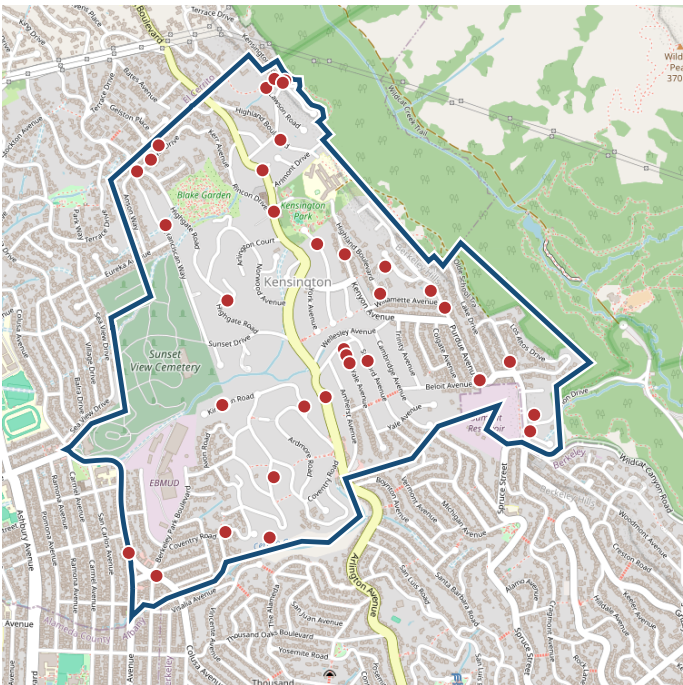
Recent Monthly Activity



Kensington Category Trend



Kensington Incident Locations



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors; boundary from Contra Costa County -K zoning data

Non-Kensington Incidents for EC-K Fire Department

Group	Location or assignment	Incidents	Station reliability	Response records	90th PSAP-to-arrival
El Cerrito	Station 55 primary incidents	13	84.62%	13/13	00:11:18
El Cerrito	Stations 51/52 primary incidents	186	95.16%	170/186	00:08:59
EC subtotal	All El Cerrito incidents	199		183/199	00:09:13
Other	Non-EC-K Station 55 response	3		0/3	N/P
Other	Non-EC-K Stations 51/52 only	41		35/41	00:08:47
Other	Non-EC-K station unspecified	2		2/2	00:10:03
Other subtotal	All non-EC-K locations	46		37/46	00:09:00
Non-K total	All non-Kensington incidents	245		220/245	00:09:05

Station 55 participated in 8 non-Kensington incidents assigned to Stations 51/52.

Other locations: Richmond 41, Orinda 3, Berkeley 1, Pinole 1.

Reading the Measures

Station reliability is the share of incidents assigned to Station 55 where either E155 or E355 appears among the responding units.
PSAP-to-arrival is the time from when the call is received at dispatch until the first responding unit arrives at the scene.

Kensington Fire Service Activity

May 2026 | Kensington incidents and Station 55 service

29 Kensington incidents	45 Station 55 engine incidents	00:09:07 Kensington 90th PSAP-to-arrival	92% Station 55 reliability in Kensington
----------------------------	-----------------------------------	---	---

Station 55 Engine Deployment

Unit	All scenes	Kensington	El Cerrito	Other
E155 - Type 1 engine	44	24	16	4
E355 - Type 3 engine	1	0	0	1
Station 55 unique incidents	45	24	16	5

Other scene locations: Berkeley: 3, Orinda: 1, Richmond: 1.

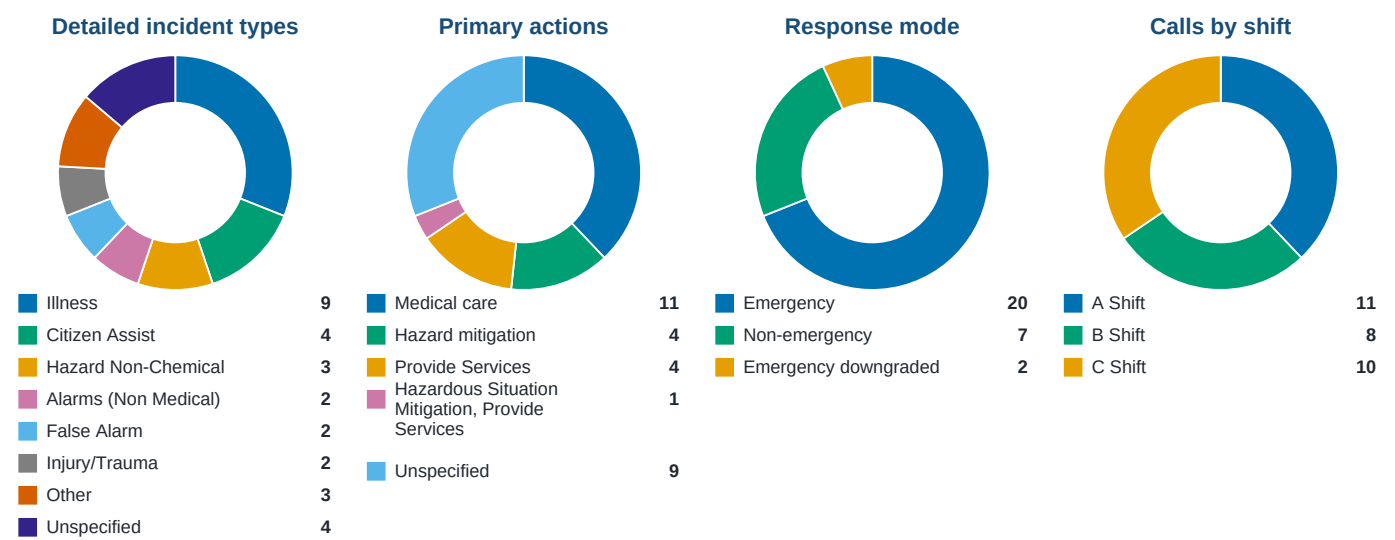
Station 55 Response Time by Scene Location

Scene location	Engine incidents	Time recorded	Median PSAP-to-arrival	90th PSAP-to-arrival
Kensington	24	23/24	00:06:26	00:08:28
El Cerrito	16	16/16	00:07:21	00:09:47
Other	5	4/5	00:09:38	00:14:02
All Station 55 incidents	45	43/45	00:07:10	00:09:59

Kensington Calls by Category

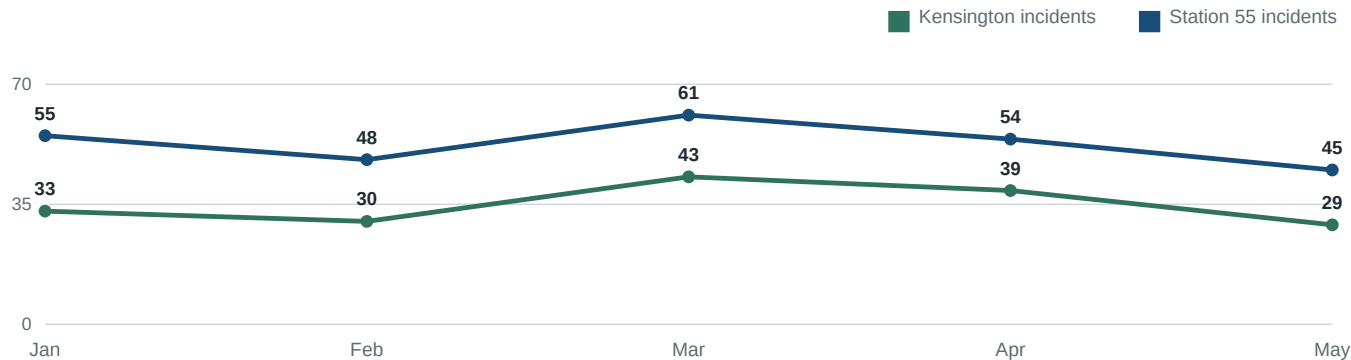
Category	Count	Share
Fire	0	0%
Medical	12	41.38%
Rescue	0	0%
Hazardous Situation	4	13.79%
Public Service	7	24.14%
No Emergency	5	17.24%
Unspecified	1	3.45%

Kensington Incident Detail

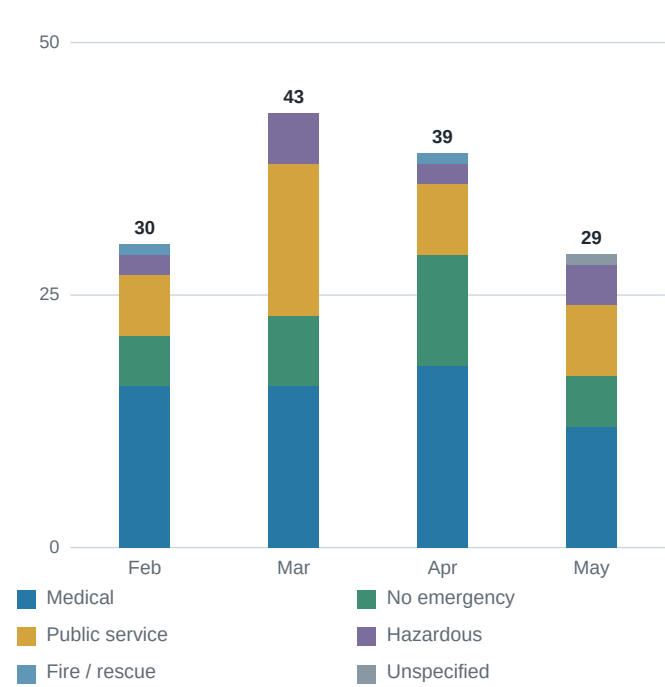


"Other" combines the remaining low-frequency categories.

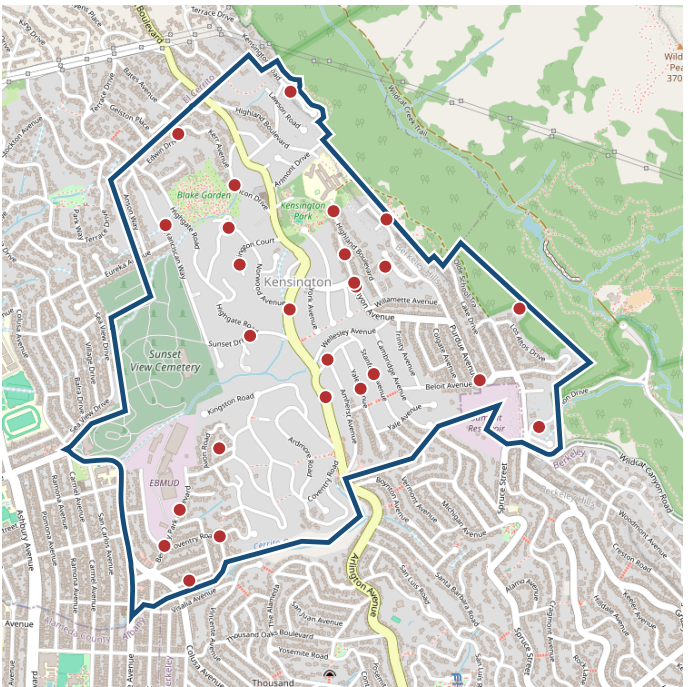
Recent Monthly Activity



Kensington Category Trend



Kensington Incident Locations



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors; boundary from Contra Costa County -K zoning data

Non-Kensington Incidents for EC-K Fire Department

Group	Location or assignment	Incidents	Station reliability	Response records	90th PSAP-to-arrival
El Cerrito	Station 55 primary incidents	13	92.31%	13/13	00:10:11
El Cerrito	Stations 51/52 primary incidents	159	84.91%	145/159	00:08:34
EC subtotal	All El Cerrito incidents	172		158/172	00:08:41
Other	Non-EC-K Station 55 response	5		4/5	00:14:02
Other	Non-EC-K Stations 51/52 only	50		39/50	00:10:05
Other	Non-EC-K station unspecified	2		2/2	00:07:50
Other subtotal	All non-EC-K locations	57		45/57	00:10:35
Non-K total	All non-Kensington incidents	229		203/229	00:09:05

Station 55 participated in 4 non-Kensington incidents assigned to Stations 51/52.

Other locations: Richmond 48, San Pablo 5, Berkeley 3, Orinda 1.

Reading the Measures

Station reliability is the share of incidents assigned to Station 55 where either E155 or E355 appears among the responding units.
PSAP-to-arrival is the time from when the call is received at dispatch until the first responding unit arrives at the scene.

Kensington Fire Service Activity

June 2026 | Kensington incidents and Station 55 service

39	52	00:11:43	97.06%
Kensington incidents	Station 55 engine incidents	Kensington 90th PSAP-to-arrival	Station 55 reliability in Kensington

Station 55 Engine Deployment

Unit	All scenes	Kensington	El Cerrito	Other
E155 - Type 1 engine	50	35	11	4
E355 - Type 3 engine	3	3	0	0
Station 55 unique incidents	52	37	11	4

Other scene locations: Berkeley: 1, Concord: 1, Orinda: 1, Unspecified: 1.

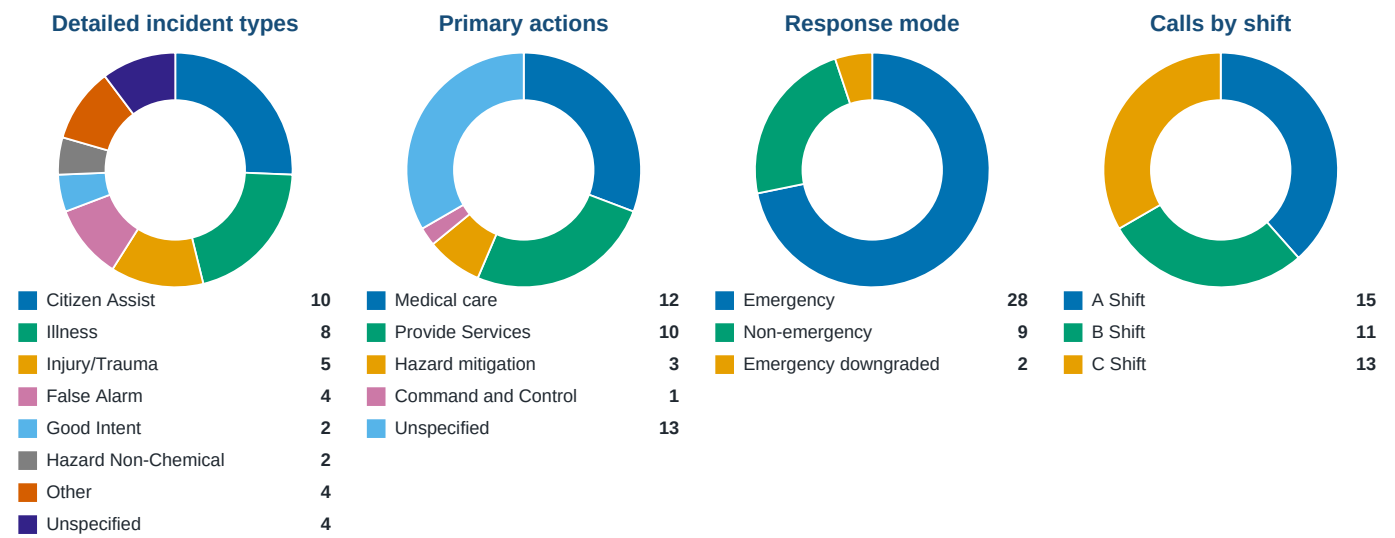
Station 55 Response Time by Scene Location

Scene location	Engine incidents	Time recorded	Median PSAP-to-arrival	90th PSAP-to-arrival
Kensington	37	36/37	00:06:04	00:11:58
El Cerrito	11	11/11	00:06:37	00:07:11
Other	4	2/4	00:12:32	00:14:45
All Station 55 incidents	52	49/52	00:06:23	00:11:36

Kensington Calls by Category

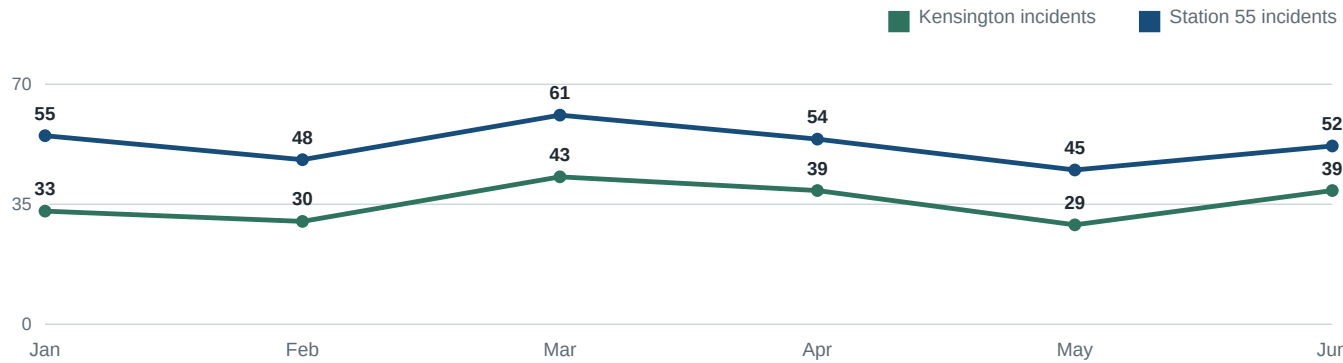
Category	Count	Share
Fire	1	2.56%
Medical	13	33.33%
Rescue	0	0%
Hazardous Situation	4	10.26%
Public Service	11	28.21%
No Emergency	10	25.64%

Kensington Incident Detail

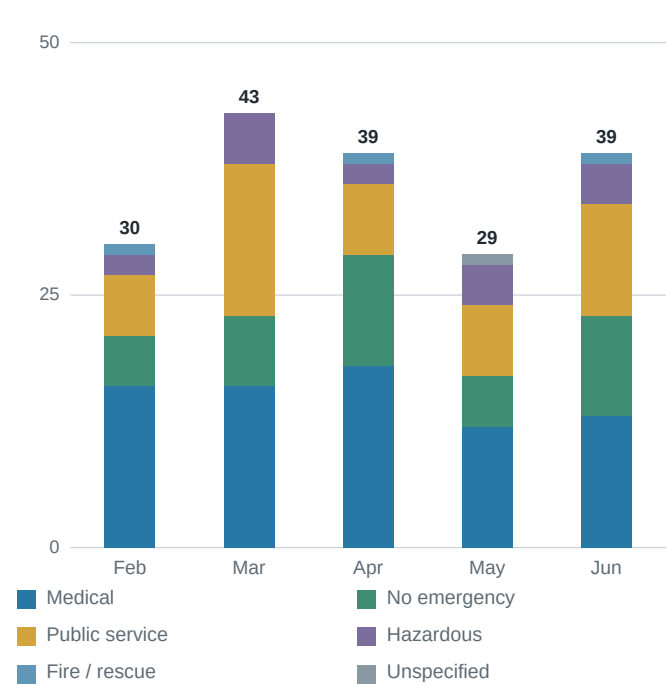


"Other" combines the remaining low-frequency categories.

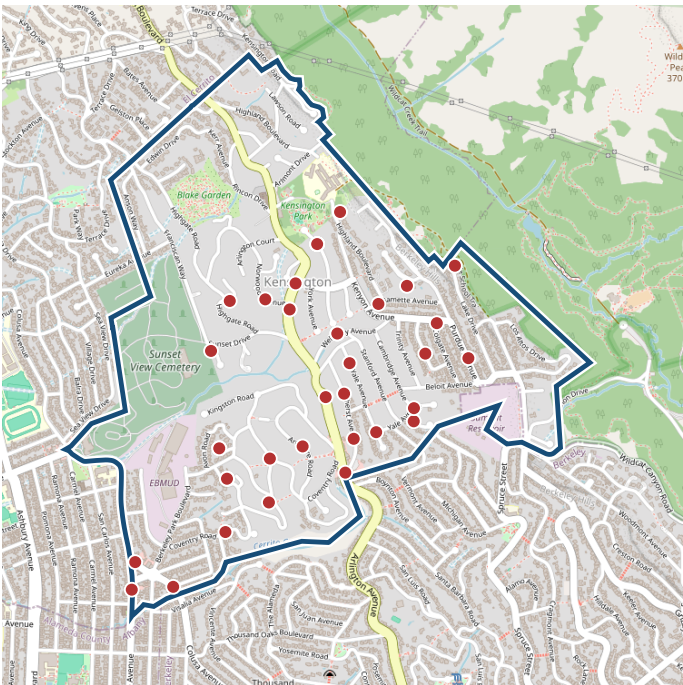
Recent Monthly Activity



Kensington Category Trend



Kensington Incident Locations



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors; boundary from Contra Costa County -K zoning data

Non-Kensington Incidents for EC-K Fire Department

Group	Location or assignment	Incidents	Station reliability	Response records	90th PSAP-to-arrival
El Cerrito	Station 55 primary incidents	3	100%	3/3	00:06:57
El Cerrito	Stations 51/52 primary incidents	173	98.84%	159/173	00:08:23
EC subtotal	All El Cerrito incidents	176		162/176	00:08:21
Other	Non-EC-K Station 55 response	4		2/4	00:14:45
Other	Non-EC-K Stations 51/52 only	49		38/49	00:10:28
Other subtotal	All non-EC-K locations	53		40/53	00:10:30
Non-K total	All non-Kensington incidents	229		202/229	00:08:46

Station 55 participated in 8 non-Kensington incidents assigned to Stations 51/52.

Other locations: Richmond 44, San Pablo 4, Berkeley 2, Concord 1, Orinda 1, Unspecified 1.

Reading the Measures

Station reliability is the share of incidents assigned to Station 55 where either E155 or E355 appears among the responding units.

PSAP-to-arrival is the time from when the call is received at dispatch until the first responding unit arrives at the scene.

Kensington Fire Service Activity

July 2026 | Kensington incidents and Station 55 service

35	67	00:09:21	96.97%
Kensington incidents	Station 55 engine incidents	Kensington 90th PSAP-to-arrival	Station 55 reliability in Kensington

Station 55 Engine Deployment

Unit	All scenes	Kensington	El Cerrito	Other
E155 - Type 1 engine	67	32	26	9
E355 - Type 3 engine	0	0	0	0
Station 55 unique incidents	67	32	26	9

Other scene locations: Berkeley: 3, Orinda: 3, Unspecified: 2, Richmond: 1.

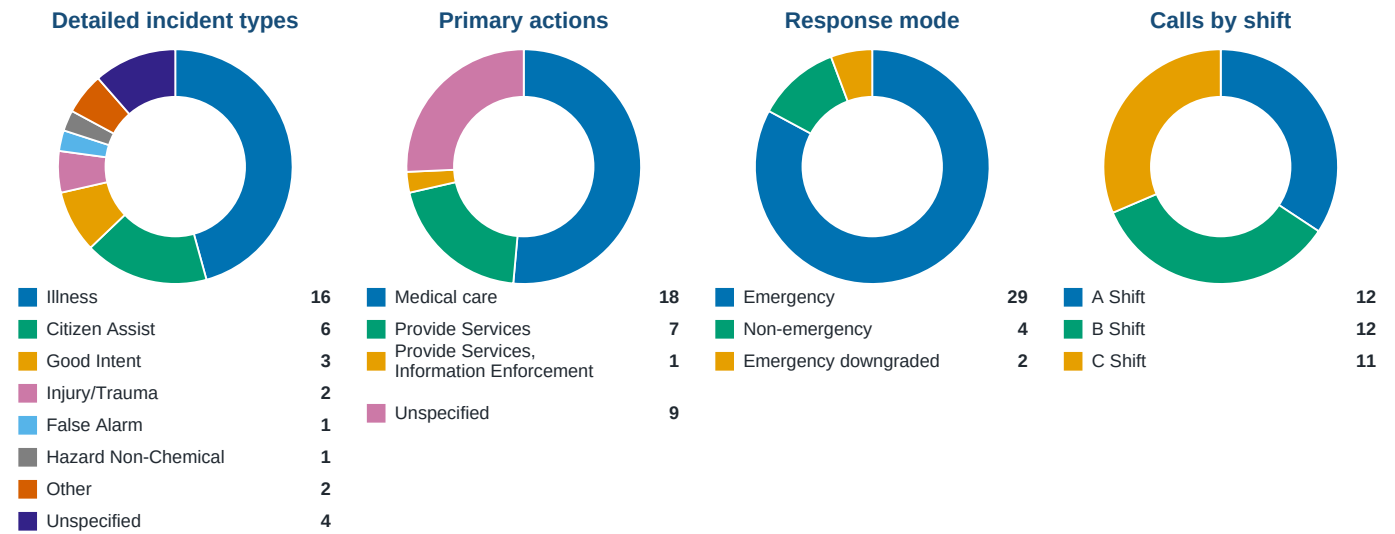
Station 55 Response Time by Scene Location

Scene location	Engine incidents	Time recorded	Median PSAP-to-arrival	90th PSAP-to-arrival
Kensington	32	31/32	00:06:37	00:07:50
El Cerrito	26	24/26	00:07:28	00:09:21
Other	9	8/9	00:11:48	00:14:54
All Station 55 incidents	67	63/67	00:07:13	00:10:33

Kensington Calls by Category

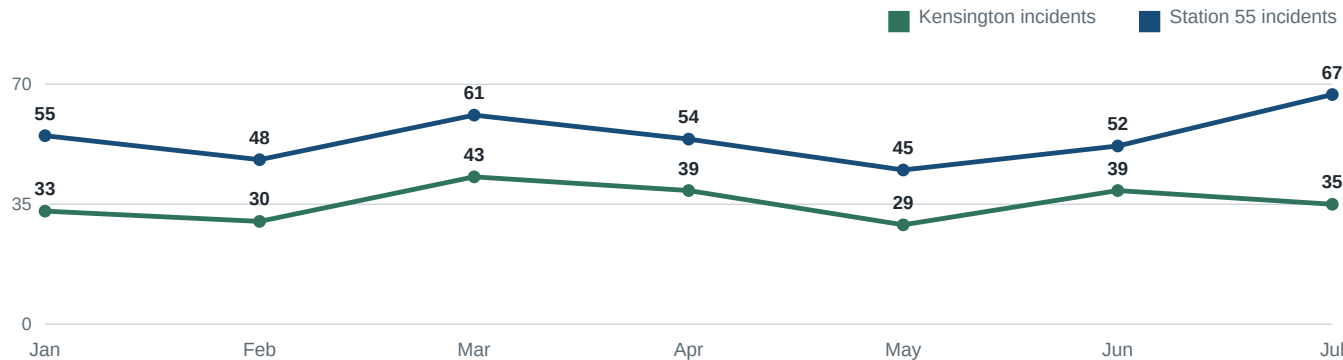
Category	Count	Share
Fire	0	0%
Medical	19	54.29%
Rescue	0	0%
Hazardous Situation	2	5.71%
Public Service	6	17.14%
No Emergency	7	20%
Unspecified	1	2.86%

Kensington Incident Detail

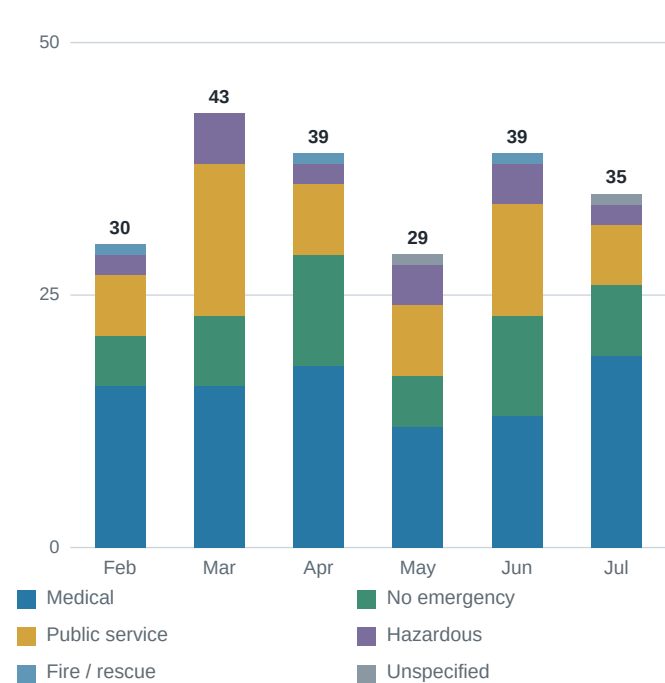


"Other" combines the remaining low-frequency categories.

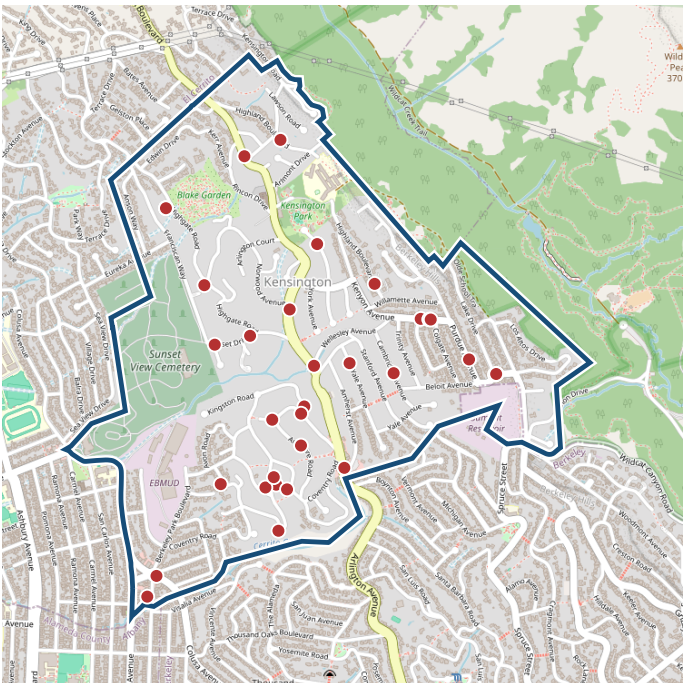
Recent Monthly Activity



Kensington Category Trend



Kensington Incident Locations



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors; boundary from Contra Costa County -K zoning data

Non-Kensington Incidents for EC-K Fire Department

Group	Location or assignment	Incidents	Station reliability	Response records	90th PSAP-to-arrival
El Cerrito	Station 55 primary incidents	18	100%	18/18	00:09:31
El Cerrito	Stations 51/52 primary incidents	163	92.64%	142/163	00:08:35
EC subtotal	All El Cerrito incidents	181		160/181	00:08:58
Other	Non-EC-K Station 55 response	9		8/9	00:14:54
Other	Non-EC-K Stations 51/52 only	48		36/48	00:15:41
Other	Non-EC-K station unspecified	1		1/1	00:18:16
Other subtotal	All non-EC-K locations	58		45/58	00:16:21
Non-K total	All non-Kensington incidents	239		205/239	00:09:50

Station 55 participated in 8 non-Kensington incidents assigned to Stations 51/52.

Other locations: Richmond 43, Orinda 4, San Pablo 4, Berkeley 3, Unspecified 2, Clayton 1, El Sobrante 1.

Reading the Measures

Station reliability is the share of incidents assigned to Station 55 where either E155 or E355 appears among the responding units.

PSAP-to-arrival is the time from when the call is received at dispatch until the first responding unit arrives at the scene.

Kensington Fire Service Activity

August 2026 | Kensington incidents and Station 55 service

28 Kensington incidents	56 Station 55 engine incidents	00:09:11 Kensington 90th PSAP-to-arrival	100% Station 55 reliability in Kensington
----------------------------	-----------------------------------	---	--

Station 55 Engine Deployment

Unit	All scenes	Kensington	El Cerrito	Other
E155 - Type 1 engine	56	28	22	6
E355 - Type 3 engine	0	0	0	0
Station 55 unique incidents	56	28	22	6

Other scene locations: Unspecified: 3, Berkeley: 2, Orinda: 1.

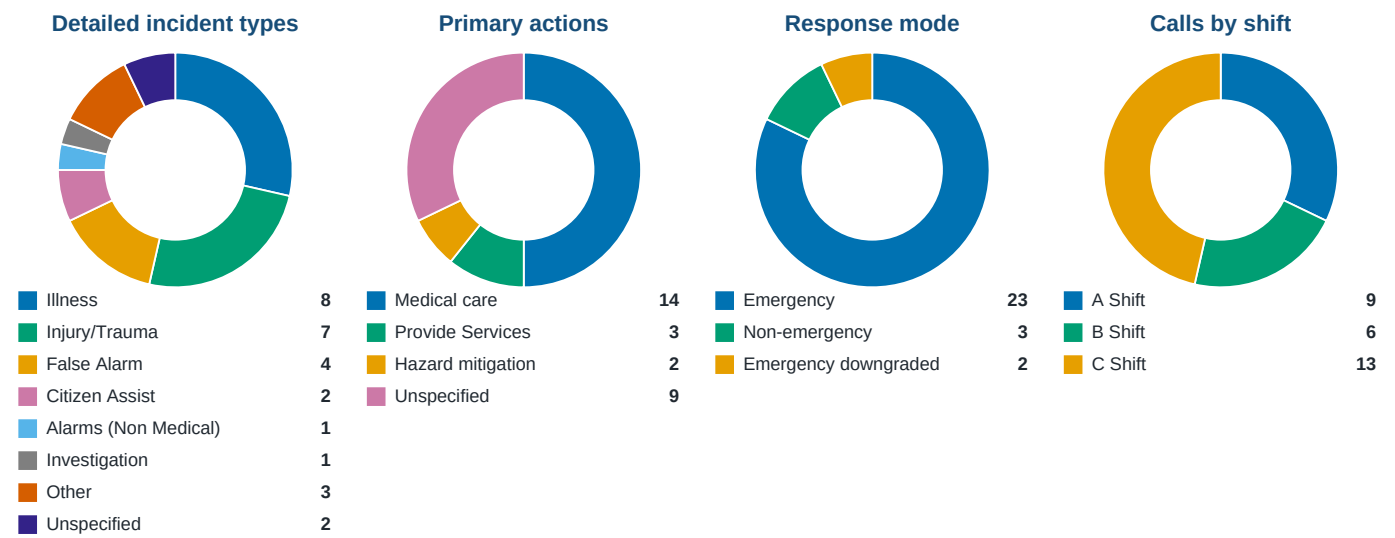
Station 55 Response Time by Scene Location

Scene location	Engine incidents	Time recorded	Median PSAP-to-arrival	90th PSAP-to-arrival
Kensington	28	24/28	00:06:27	00:09:11
El Cerrito	22	18/22	00:07:06	00:10:04
Other	6	4/6	00:12:34	00:14:50
All Station 55 incidents	56	46/56	00:06:40	00:10:48

Kensington Calls by Category

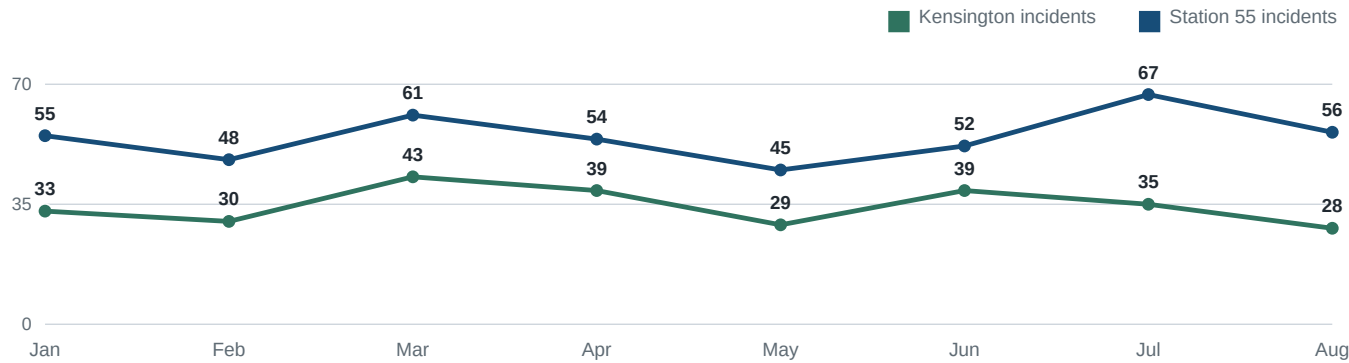
Category	Count	Share
Fire	0	0%
Medical	15	53.57%
Rescue	0	0%
Hazardous Situation	2	7.14%
Public Service	5	17.86%
No Emergency	6	21.43%

Kensington Incident Detail

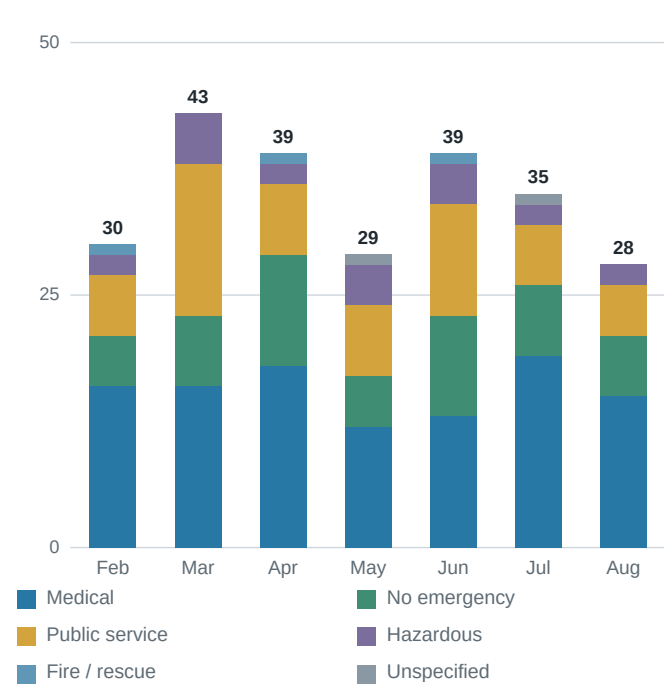


"Other" combines the remaining low-frequency categories.

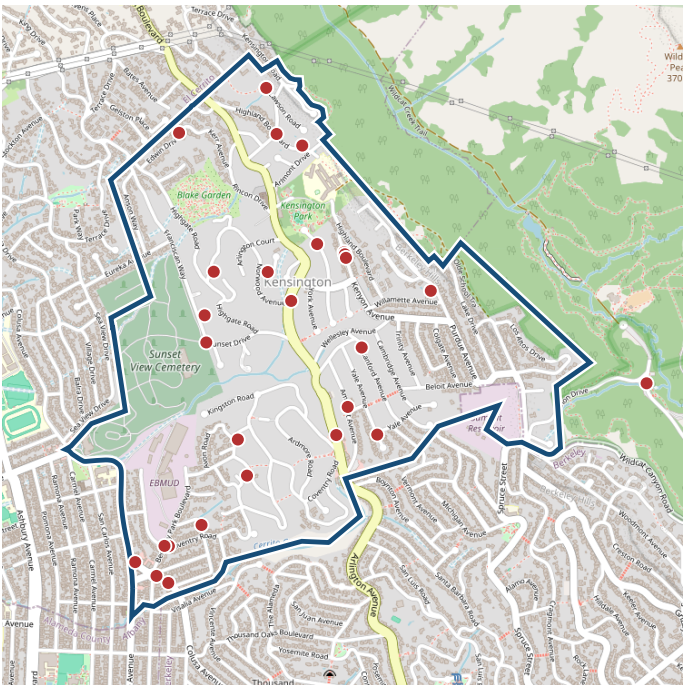
Recent Monthly Activity



Kensington Category Trend



Kensington Incident Locations



Map © OpenStreetMap contributors; boundary from Contra Costa County -K zoning data

Non-Kensington Incidents for EC-K Fire Department

Group	Location or assignment	Incidents	Station reliability	Response records	90th PSAP-to-arrival
El Cerrito	Station 55 primary incidents	15	100%	14/15	00:10:18
El Cerrito	Stations 51/52 primary incidents	165	97.58%	153/165	00:07:42
El Cerrito	Primary station unspecified	1		1/1	00:08:04
EC subtotal	All El Cerrito incidents	181		168/181	00:08:12
Other	Non-EC-K Station 55 response	6		4/6	00:14:50
Other	Non-EC-K Stations 51/52 only	49		42/49	00:09:50
Other subtotal	All non-EC-K locations	55		46/55	00:11:17
Non-K total	All non-Kensington incidents	236		214/236	00:09:26

Station 55 participated in 7 non-Kensington incidents assigned to Stations 51/52.

Other locations: Richmond 41, San Pablo 7, Unspecified 3, Berkeley 2, El Sobrante 1, Orinda 1.

Reading the Measures

Station reliability is the share of incidents assigned to Station 55 where either E155 or E355 appears among the responding units. **PSAP-to-arrival** is the time from when the call is received at dispatch until the first responding unit arrives at the scene.