



Kensington Community Services District

A BOARD APPROVED DIRECTION FOR RED FLAG DAYS IN KENSINGTON

Introduction: The beautiful community of Kensington, California is susceptible to wildfires. The wildlands east of Kensington and the hilly, narrow streets, while quaint and beautiful, can be extremely dangerous with the right conditions.

This document, approved by the Board of Directors for the Kensington Community Services after input from the Kensington Police Chief and the El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Chief along with the Emergency Preparedness Committee will assist in providing information and direction for when weather conditions cause the National Weather Service to declare a Red Flag Day in Kensington.

Thankfully, because of the proximity to the ocean and the typical fog and moisture that is generated, Red Flag Days are rarely proclaimed.

This document was designed with a question and an answer. It does not pretend to be all inclusive with all the various scenarios that could potentially take place and it does not address other natural disasters such as earthquakes.

Q: What is a Red Flag Day?

A: It is a term used to reflect a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning when dry fuels, plus dangerous weather like high winds, extremely low humidity, dry thunderstorms, lightning, or dry frontal passage increase the chances for a severe fire to occur.

The National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office issues them. A Fire Weather Watch is typically issued 18-96 hours in advance while a Red Flag Warning indicates critical fire weather is impending or already occurring.

They are declared to give fire agencies time to staff up, reposition resources and prepare for rapid fire growth. This notice can be of benefit to all residents, businesses and other operations that involve group activities.

Q: What is a PDS?

A: PDS stands for Particularly Dangerous Situation. Again, the National Weather Services will place this wording inside a Red Flag Warning to highlight an exceptional and especially dangerous possible fire-weather event for the benefit of first responders and the community.

Q: What direction is to be given for public schools, churches, KCC activities, gatherings at the Public Library and any other areas in Kensington with people, when a Red Flag Day is forecasted?

A: Each organization should have a designated person who monitors such occurrences and understands the degree of severity of the Red Flag Day. Based on the severity of the weather forecast and the area that is being utilized the person in charge of said organization may decide to Close for the day or leave early. Other less drastic measures may include prohibiting smoking, open flames, and any ignition source. Proper staffing levels, ensuring that emergency exits, alarms and PA systems are fully functional, and everyone understands evacuation readiness would be prudent.

For PDS declarations or during Red Flag events with sustained winds exceeding 45 miles per hour it is recommended that public buildings and public activities be shut down and suspended.

Q: How will Kensington Fire Department, Kensington Police Department and Kensington Community Services District respond to the NWS calling a Red Flag Day in Kensington?

A: The Kensington Fire Department, based on the risk profile, will staff accordingly and in conjunction with the California Office of Emergency Services.

The Kensington Police Department will increase the staff to three officers.

Q: Why are parking restrictions recommended on certain streets when the NWS calls a Red Flag Day for Kensington?

A: There is a need to support emergency access to the emergency. Typically, emergency vehicles will be going in the opposite direction of the residents who would be leaving the area. The streets in Kensington are very narrow in certain locations so restricted parking would be necessary to allow the emergency vehicles to access the emergency services.

Q: How will this need be communicated and enforced?

A: The Board of Directors approves an ordinance that outlines the need for vehicles not to park on designated streets on Red Flag Days. In conjunction with that there will be posted signage and a method of communication. The Kensington Police Department will enforce violators of this Ordinance.

Q: What is the District's direction regarding evacuation needs?

A: It is important that every resident understands the best route to evacuate based on where the wildfire emergency takes place. Residents cannot rely on first responders. Residents should have their Go Bag ready to immediately access, vehicles should always be kept at least half full of fuel and the ability to access a radio for notifications is important.

Q: What is CERT and how might an active CERT Team assist on Red Flag days?

A: CERT stands for Community Emergency Response Team. These are community volunteers who have been trained and practice fire directed assistance in emergency situations. A good CERT team would be activated and directed to close roads, direct traffic, contact residents, and assist in signage.

Q: How would each person in Kensington become ready to respond to a fire related emergency?

A: First, read over and follow the direction that is provided in several hard copy and electronic copy information packets that exist. Second, register with the Contra Costa Community Warning System for alerts and evacuation messages. The District will continue to use Nixle, which also requires registration, as well as social media, websites, and other platforms.

ACTION ITEMS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT

- Draft and prepare an ordinance for the KCSD Board to approve outlining the Red Flag Parking Restrictions. This would include the initial listing of streets impacted by the Ordinance.
- Purchase and install signage that clearly identifies “no parking” on Red Flag Days.
- Provide clear instructions on how to access the National Weather Service for Red Flag Days and especially Particularly Dangerous Situations within Red Flag declarations.
- Once this document is board approved, distribute it to all, especially organizations in the community.
- Internally between Fire, Police, CSD and Contra Costa Public Works, define each entity’s responsibility.
- Contact the Cemetery and draw up an agreement for evacuation through their property. Assign responsible residents with a key to the gate.