



# **Kensington Emergency Preparedness Report**

**June 2026**

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Kensington's emergency preparedness initiatives continue to demonstrate strong community engagement in vegetation management, ember risk reduction, Firewise participation, and CERT organization. Current program activity reflects growing resident awareness, stronger neighborhood-level participation, and increasing willingness to take mitigation actions that reduce wildfire risk around homes, shared corridors, and community infrastructure.

## **Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement (HVRR)**

The grant period closed on May 31, 2026, with 49 applications submitted. Most applications cluster around a relatively narrow set of price points, with the median at \$2,000 and a higher average driven by several larger requests, indicating that the cost-share tier is helping residents pursue more substantial vegetation removal projects.

The largest requests included Monterey Cypress removal, quoted at \$20,000 and \$16,245. Across vegetation entries, "Other" remains the most common category, followed by Juniper, Bamboo, and Eucalyptus, reinforcing that each property presents distinct conditions and that a standardized vegetation-removal approach is not practical across the district.

As larger-scope vegetation projects come into focus, the HVRR program is effectively operating as the front edge of a broader vegetation management effort rather than a simple rebate program.

Engaging a subject-matter expert familiar with tree health, vegetation continuity, Zone Zero principles, and prevailing labor costs would help the district guide residents in reducing risk without resorting to clear-cutting.

There are examples where residents, acting without expert guidance, have removed nearly all vegetation around their parcels and are now experiencing higher temperatures, lower soil moisture, rapid hillside erosion, and associated regret and neighbor tension.

Future program design should emphasize consultation with qualified vegetation-management professionals to balance wildfire risk reduction with slope stability, microclimate, and overall landscape health.

## **Kensington Ember Exclusion Program (KEEP)**

A total of 91 KEEP applications were submitted, and site validations are continuing. Fewer than 25 percent of applicants indicate they plan to complete the work themselves, underscoring the need for qualified service-provider support and a delivery model that reflects the complexity of individual homes.

Partnerships with Fire Safe Kensington and Firewise to share service-provider information have been helpful in guiding residents as they begin researching installation support. Early response indicates that the pilot is well-received and that residents value both the mitigation opportunity and the hands-on support provided through the program.

Current program activity also points to an operational service gap. A future program redesign should consider engaging a specialized contractor with building and construction experience who can assess and perform work in complex areas such as crawl spaces, attics, and rooflines, where standard vegetation or handyperson services may not be sufficient for district needs.

Less than 25 percent of applicants plan to complete the work themselves, indicating that most residents require contractor support rather than a do-it-yourself approach. This need is especially acute in a district where homes vary widely in age, design, access, and vulnerability. Because the program already requires applicants to provide measurements, having the same qualified individual conduct site validation, take measurements, access vent spaces, and complete installation would streamline delivery and improve consistency.

## **Red Flag Ready- Flag Placement Plan**

A study is underway to assess storage, access, placement, and distribution needs for Red Flag Warning flags. Recommendations are being developed for presentation to the Emergency Preparedness Committee and may inform a future report to the Board of Directors.

As CERT and Firewise volunteer capacity grows, both groups may become viable partners in flag distribution during National Weather Service Red Flag Warning events affecting Kensington in Zone 508. The flags are intended to provide visible reminders on key streets identified for Red Flag Day parking restrictions, and additional flag purchases may be proposed for review.

## **Firewise**

Kensington now has 22 recognized Firewise communities, including Trinity and Cambridge, which were recognized earlier this year. Each time a new Firewise community is recognized, door hangers are placed at every home, providing both resident notification and a practical way to understand how quickly door-to-door canvassing can be completed in a given area.

That process offers added preparedness value beyond outreach alone. It can help inform neighborhood-level planning for potential CERT-led welfare checks during a disaster, while also strengthening familiarity between residents, Firewise leaders, and KCSD preparedness efforts.

Neighborhood engagement continues to build through local events and increased coordination among Firewise leads. Firewise leaders are reinforcing preparedness messaging, supporting KCSD program participation, and improving coordination among neighbors, public safety agencies, and partner organizations.

Leads west of Arlington remain especially focused on eucalyptus reduction, particularly along the Sunset corridor and toward Sunset View Cemetery. Firewise recruitment and recognition efforts are continuing, and new communities are beginning to organize around larger mitigation opportunities, including the development of Measure X projects.

Firewise leads were provided the link to the Kensington Police's registration for National Night Out (8/4/2026) to begin planning their block parties.

## **CERT**

The recent community kick-off was well attended, drawing more than 55 participants from El Cerrito and Kensington. The event also helped increase interest in the CERT course that El Cerrito Kensington Fire plans to offer in Fall 2026.

CERT registration is being handled differently this year through a Google sign-up list rather than a capped call-in list through the fire station. In prior years, registration effectively closed at 30 participants; this year, names and contact information will continue to be collected beyond class capacity in order to build a broader volunteer roster and maintain an active training pipeline.

The Fall 2026 CERT course currently has 28 registrants, filling roughly 93 percent of the 30-person class capacity. Kensington residents represent 46.4 percent of current registrants, with the remainder coming from neighboring communities. The May 20 CERT kick-off event generated 11 registrations—39.3 percent of the total signups—demonstrating strong conversion from in-person outreach to course participation.

El Cerrito Kensington CERT now has a steering committee that meets weekly to support the development of a sustainable, community-led emergency response capability. At the block level, a May 9 Richardson meeting reached 50 percent participation, with 13 of 26 households attending, demonstrating the kind of localized engagement that can support long-term resilience.

Amateur Radio Field Day is scheduled for Saturday, June 27, in Kensington Park, with demonstrations and opportunities to sign up for training.