



THE FIRE PLUG

Spring Edition | 2025



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Built to Protect: Kensington's Fire Station 55 Reopens with Modern Upgrades and Heartfelt History

After years of planning, design, and construction, the Kensington Fire Protection District is proud to announce that Fire Station 55 is now complete—and fully occupied. The milestone was marked with a community open house on February 8, 2025, welcoming neighbors of all ages to explore the new fire station and celebrate the next chapter in Kensington's fire service history.

The open house drew several hundred community members, who enjoyed a festive afternoon filled with music, memories, and a behind-the-scenes look at the new state-of-the-art facility. A live band provided a lively soundtrack, and residents gathered to reflect on the evolution of fire protection in Kensington—flipping through historic photos, gear, and memorabilia highlighting the fire department's legacy.





“We’re not just protecting individual homes—we’re protecting evacuation routes, neighborhoods, and the entire community.”

— KFPD General Manager Mary Morris-Mayorga

Rooting Out Risk: Kensington’s Hazardous Vegetation Removal Grant Program Gains Momentum

Kensington residents are stepping up to reduce wildfire risk. Since its launch, the Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement Grant Program has grown into a major initiative supporting property owners in removing some of the most flammable and dangerous plants from their homes and yards.

The Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) initially funded this program as a \$10,000 pilot, but community interest quickly prompted the Board to expand funding to **\$100,000** in February. That decision is already proving impactful.

Over 55% of applications target juniper, eucalyptus, or bamboo, all well-known in fire science for their extreme flammability and explosive burn characteristics. Other hazardous vegetation being removed includes pampas grass, cedars, dead or dying trees, and vegetation that could block egress routes during a fire or risk ignition to a house. Junipers, in particular, are a

“The demand for this program was so strong and so needed, that the Board increased funding tenfold. Neighbors were even going door-to-door to help elderly residents apply. That’s the kind of grassroots action that builds real fire resilience.”

— Danielle Madugo, KFPD Board Vice-President

major focus. Often planted along sidewalks or in front yards, they can create a perilous obstacle to evacuation for residents and first responders alike. Removing them is not only a defensible space measure—it’s a life-saving one.

Residents are increasingly recognizing the danger of keeping junipers near the front of their homes. In a wildfire, these plants can be extremely volatile and obstruct evacuation routes. Many junipers are planted along sidewalks where most residents park their cars, this is a risk the community is actively reducing through this vegetation removal program.

Firewise communities are leveraging the grant in tandem with chipping days, and many residents are helping their elderly neighbors apply, even going door-to-door to spread the word. The Kensington Fire Protection District is currently evaluating the program and is working toward re-opening a filing period for new applications.

Do You Have Fire-Hazardous Plants?

Fire Safe Marin offers a valuable resource listing fire-hazardous plants commonly found in our region.

Visit the website to expand your knowledge and become more aware of landscaping choices that may increase wildfire risk.

www.kensingtonfire.org/fire-hazardous-plants





KENSINGTON
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

KENSINGTON FIREWISE



KENSINGTON FIREWISE

 Officially Recognized
Kensington Firewise Area

 Interest Forming

 Kensington Firewise Area
In Development

 Berkeley Firewise
Neighborhoods

Interested in having Firewise in your neighborhood?
Email prepare@kensingtonfire.org.



Firewise Takes Flight: Kensington Residents Unite, Making Huge Strides Toward Wildfire Resilience

Neighbors are going beyond their own fences and forming Firewise USA communities to build a more connected, prepared, and wildfire-resilient town. And it's working.

What is Firewise?

Firewise USA® is a community-based program that helps neighbors come together to reduce wildfire risk. It's a national initiative from the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), and it empowers residents with the knowledge, tools, and structure to assess risk, plan strategically, and take action together.

Insurance carriers offer some small discounts, but the biggest benefit is the community's collaboration to reduce each other's wildfire risk.

In Kensington, it's also helping build stronger social bonds—and that's proving to be just as valuable in emergency preparedness.

So far, Kensington has four officially recognized Firewise communities and at least eight more in development. Each is taking unique and inspiring steps:

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- **Wildcat Firewise** is focusing on building a network of neighborhood ambassadors—resilience “influencers”—to raise awareness about home hardening. The idea? Learn about a specific topic and use gentle, informed persuasion to help neighbors improve their own defensible space and survival odds. It’s about creating a culture of awareness and shared responsibility.

- **Maybeck Firewise** has hit the ground running. They’ve hosted community meetings with refreshments, organized a Measure X-funded chipping day, and welcomed the Diablo Fire Safe Council for a presentation on defensible space and home hardening. The gatherings are not just informative—they’re bringing neighbors closer.

- **Redtail Ridge Firewise** recently hosted an expert-led assessment presentation with Fire Marshal Chief Chase Beckman. Despite stormy weather, dozens of residents showed up, proving their deep commitment to making their homes more fire-resilient.

- **Tilden Firewise** just hosted its kickoff event, drawing together residents from three local streets—many of whom had never met before. Their goal? Build trust, share knowledge, and create lasting relationships that will make emergency response and fire mitigation efforts far more effective.

- **Shakespeare Cluster** (Avon Road area) is the newest recognized Firewise area and is already active—hosting regular neighborhood meetings.

- Other neighborhoods including Arlmont, Beloit, Edgecroft, Kingston, and Kenyon/Highland are actively developing their applications, while several more parts of town are raising their hands and asking how to join the Kensington Firewise movement.

These efforts aren’t just reducing wildfire risk—they’re creating real relationships. Residents are meeting each other, sharing tools, exchanging information, and checking in on one another. That kind of social cohesion is making an impact on improving community resilience and emergency preparedness.

How to Start a Firewise Community

If you want to learn what it takes to form a Firewise community for your neighborhood, contact Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela through email, prepare@kensingtonfire.org.

Kensington Firewise Hosts Wildfire Community Preparedness Day Event

Kensington Firewise communities will host an informational booth during the Paper Shredding Event on Saturday, May 3rd, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Join our WUI-Walk guided tour around Wildcat Firewise to learn about life on the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

To RSVP for the WUI Walk and learn more about this event, visit

www.kensingtonfire.org/WCPD25



KENSINGTON
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT



Wildfire Community Preparedness Day

SAT, MAY 3rd, 10 am-12 pm

Come meet your Firewise Neighbors and discover how you can help protect your home and community.

Join us at our booth during the Kensington Fire Paper Shredding Event. We'd love to connect with you!

Don't miss our WUI-Walk, a guided tour through Wildcat Firewise, where you'll get a firsthand look at what it's like to live in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and learn how neighbors are working together to reduce Kensington's wildfire risk.

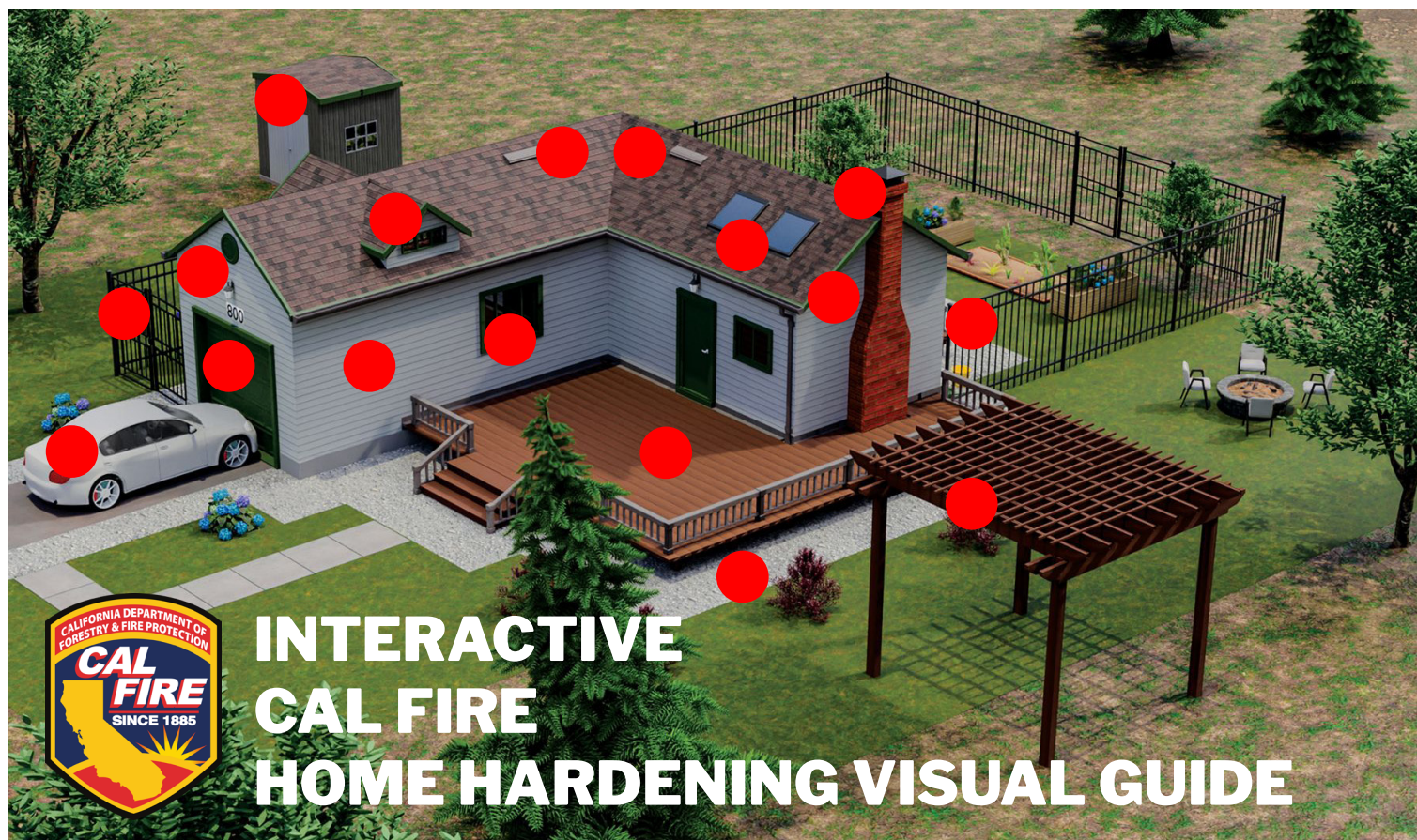
Paper Shredding Event & WUI-WALK

Saturday, May 3rd, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

**Unitarian Universalist Church - North Parking Lot
One Lawson Road, Kensington**

To RSVP for the WUI-WALK:

www.kensingtonfire.org/WCPD25



Kensington residents live in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, where wind-blown embers pose a serious threat. CAL FIRE's interactive Home Hardening Visual Guide offers simple, effective ways to reduce this risk and make your home more fire-resistant.

One of the most important areas to address is **Zone 0**—the first five feet around your home. This zone should be clear of anything combustible, like mulch, wood piles, or dead plants. The guide shows how to block ember entry points, upgrade vents, and reduce fire hazards using real-life visuals and expert tips.

Visit www.fire.ca.gov/home-hardening to explore the guide and start taking steps to protect your home, your neighbors, and all of Kensington.

Upgrading Your Home? Check the Building Material List

If you're planning a home hardening project or making upgrades to improve wildfire resilience, be sure to check the California State Fire Marshal's Building Materials Listing (BML) first.

This searchable online tool identifies building products that meet the state's rigorous fire safety standards—everything from roofing and siding to vents and insulation. Materials listed in the BML have been tested and approved for use in high-fire-risk areas like Kensington.

Using these approved materials in retrofits or new construction can significantly reduce your home's vulnerability during a wildfire—and may even help with insurance considerations.

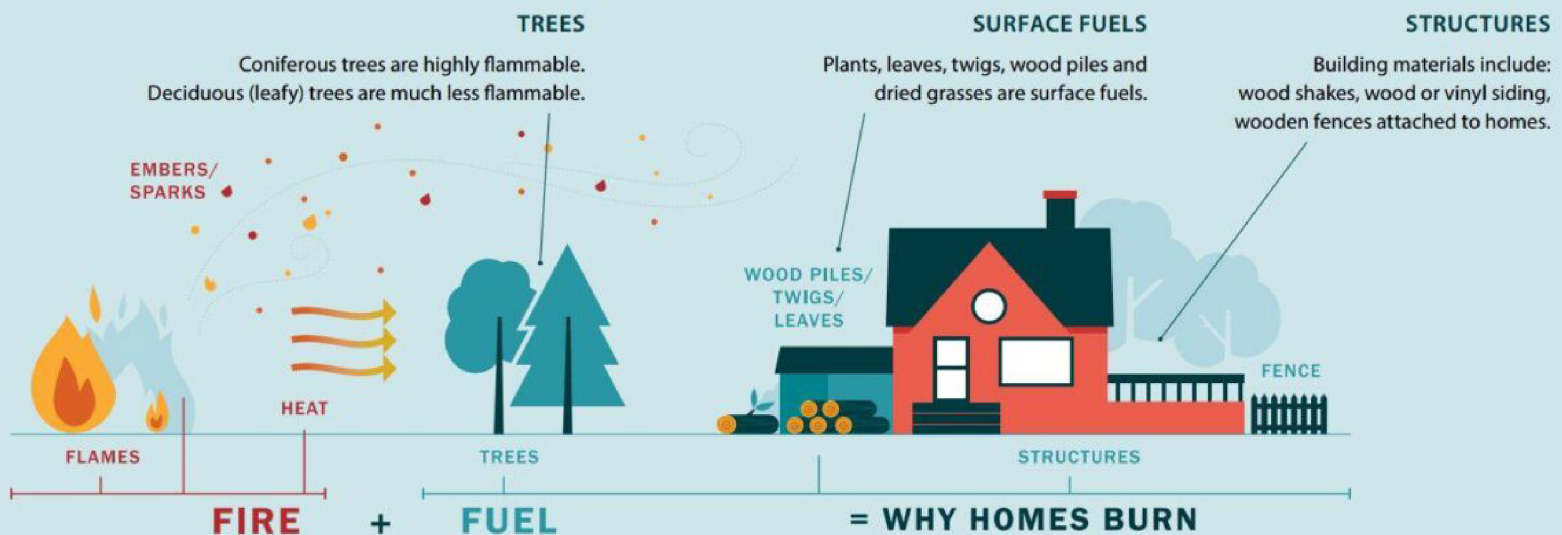
Visit the California State Fire Marshal's Building Material List: www.kensingtonfire.org/bml

HOME HARDENING

Embers are responsible for most damage during wildfires. They can accumulate on your home, deck, or porch and ignite plants, mulch, leaves, fencing, or furniture. They can also be forced into gaps in the home (e.g., attic vents or an open or broken window) and burn the home from the inside out. When this happens, there can be little damage to the surrounding vegetation, leaving people puzzled as to what caused the home to burn. Hardening your home can help increase its likelihood of survival when wildfire strikes.

Embers cause the majority of wildfire home ignitions.

HOW HOMES CATCH FIRE



Ember Storm

Embers are small pieces of burning material that can travel more than a mile ahead of a wildfire. They can create spot fires when they land on combustible materials, such as leaves in your gutter or plants next to your house and under your windows. Combustible materials should be at least 5 ft. from structures.

Radiant Heat

Radiant heat generated from burning structures or plants can be hot enough to ignite a house without direct flame contact. This is particularly challenging in densely populated areas, where the heat from one burning home can ignite the next.

Direct Flame

Depending on time and exposure, direct flame contact can ignite your home. The flaming front of a wildfire is often not hot enough to ignite a house, but plants around your house and under your windows can ignite combustible siding, or break glass allowing the fire to enter the house.

IBHS Ember Storm Test Highlights Video

The Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety's Research Center conducted a wildfire test to demonstrate vulnerabilities of a typical home during an ember storm. To view the video, scan this QR code with your mobile device or visit, www.kensingtonfire.org/emberstorm



HOME HARDENING CHECKLIST*

The California Building Code (Chapter 7A) went into effect in 2008 and requires certain fire-resistant measures, including exterior construction materials used for roof coverings, vents, exterior walls, and decks. Although it applies to new construction of residential and commercial buildings in designated fire hazard severity zones. An analysis of the homes in the path of the 2018 Camp Fire demonstrated the effectiveness of these measures. Eighteen percent of homes built before 2008 were undamaged, compared to 51 percent of the homes built after 2008. Based on California Building Code Chapter 7A and the recommendations of CALFIRE and other fire prevention experts, here are measures you can take to harden your home. Use the following pages to assess and improve your home hardening.

START FROM THE TOP

ROOF

- ☐ Is your roof covering made of Class A material to prevent ignition? Replace wood or shingle roofs with non-flammable materials like asphalt, clay, metal or slate.

RIDGE VENT

- ☐ Add a metal baffle to minimize embers with enough energy to cause ignition. Replace plastic ridge vents with metal and metal flashing.

SOLAR PANELS

- ☐ Minimize debris accumulation under and next to solar panels.

GABLE VENT

- ☐ Replace with ember and flame-resistant vent to minimize embers with enough energy to cause ignitions. Install vents with non-combustible screens less than 1/8 inch openings.

SKYLIGHTS

- ☐ Replace plastic skylight with multi-paned glass with tempered glass outer pane. If the skylight opens, install a metal screen on the inside. If the screen is non-metal, replace it with a metal screen. Screens are needed only on openable skylights.

GUTTERS

- ☐ Limit accumulation of ignitable debris in gutters by installing a non-combustible gutter cover. Add metal flashing if the fascia does not cover the roof sheathing. Prevent the accumulation of embers at the fascia sheathing intersection.

SECURE THE SIDES TO PROTECT INSIDE

CLADDING (SIDING)



Replace exterior wall covering with noncombustible material for the bottom 2 ft (from the ground); add metal flashing to protect the bottom edge of the sheathing to prevent wind-blown debris and local fuels from igniting the wall.

EAVE/ SOFFIT, CRAWL SPACE VENTS & OTHER OPENINGS



Enclose the eave with noncombustible material and seal around penetrations with fire caulking. Replace vents with ember and flame-resistant vents to minimize embers and ignitions under the structure.

WINDOWS



Add metal screens to minimize embers with enough energy to cause ignitions. Replace wooden frames and single-pane glass with double-pane windows, with one pane being tempered glass and noncombustible frames.

EXTERIOR DOORS



Install metal door jamb kits, metal thresholds with metal kick plates and metal door bottoms. Replace wooden doors with metal doors including frames and thresholds to limit ember ignition to the door and frame.

GARAGE DOORS



Add metal flashing at the base of the framing for the first 6 inches going as close to the ground as possible. If the garage door is not metal, go over with metal flashing around the bottom of the door on both inside and outside for the first 6 inches.

SLIDING DOORS



Install a non-wood-containing slider with dual-pane windows and at least one tempered glass pane, and a metal screen to limit the door and frame ember ignition.

HOME HARDENING CHECKLIST Continued

WORK YOUR WAY OUT AND AROUND

DECK



Replace walking surface deck boards with noncombustible deck boards for the first 12 inches away from the residence to prevent ignition of the deck and limit the spread of fire to the primary structure. Replace the entire deck with a noncombustible option if possible.

PATIO FURNITURE



Replace the furniture with noncombustible framing material or move away 5 ft. to prevent flames from igniting the residence. Place cushions inside the residence before egress.

FENCES



Replace with a noncombustible option for at least the first 8 ft. from the primary structure to prevent ignition of the combustible fence and spread of fire to the home.

AWNINGS



Introduce a noncombustible barrier/section between the combustible attachment and the primary structure or replace it with non-combustible material to limit the spread of fire to the house. Remove vegetation and have a 2 ft. open space separate from the primary structure.



CAL FIRE Home Hardening Demonstration Burn Video

CAL FIRE's demonstration shows the effectiveness of wildfire mitigation. This demonstration highlighted the importance of maintaining a noncombustible five-foot buffer zone, termed "Zone 0," around residential structures to mitigate the risk of ignition during wildfires.

Watch this demonstration video and learn more about Defensible Space online.

Visit: www.kensingtonfire.org/dspace

Paper Shredding Event

Kensington Fire Protection District will host a paper shredding event on Saturday, May 3rd, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. This free event is for Kensington residents to learn more about making their homes and communities safer. Please note the location of this event is the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley at 1 Lawson Road in Kensington (north parking lot).

Please note: **There will not be a pharmaceutical collection during this event.** In recognition of Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, the Kensington Firewise communities will host an information booth to promote wildfire safety and preparedness. This event is an opportunity to bring Firewise neighborhoods together and raise public awareness about the unique challenges Kensington faces as a community located in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

All are welcome to participate in the paper shredding service and learn how Kensington Firewise is working to reduce wildfire risk while strengthening connections among neighbors.

We do not accept any household hazardous waste. It is important not to flush your unwanted medications down the toilet as they will pollute our drinking water and ground soil. For more information about this event, please visit the Kensington Fire website: www.kensingtonfire.org

CPR & First Aid Training

The 2025 schedule for CPR/First Aid Training is posted. The El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Department offers this training to the general public. Get certified or renew your certification.

For more information, please visit

www.kensingtonfire.org/cpr-first-aid-training



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has Cost-Share Funding
programs and educational
material to protect your
home.**

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KENSINGTON
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COMMUNITY SAFETY EVENT

PAPER SHREDDING

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF BERKELEY
ONE LAWSON ROAD KENSINGTON**

SATURDAY, MAY 3rd, 2025

10:00am-12:00pm

INFO: WWW.KENSINGTONFIRE.ORG