



EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

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www.el-cerrito.org

DATE: March 3, 2026
TO: David Aranda: General Manager
FROM: Eric Saylor: Fire Chief
RE: **Fire Chief's Report for the March 2026 Kensington Community Services District**

Operations



Over the last few months, the Fire Department has been focusing on large fires impacting our community. However, two recent incidents illustrate the full scope of the Fire Department's mission beyond fire suppression. In one incident, crews conducted a complex over-the-side rope rescue along the ridge line after a vehicle went more than 200 feet down a steep hillside. The two-hour operation required four engines and advanced rope systems operating near maximum length. The patient was safely rescued without injury, and no Firefighters were harmed. The incident reinforced the importance of specialized training and equipment for our challenging terrain. In a separate incident, Firefighters assisted a hospice family when outside staff were unavailable. Beyond the physical assistance provided, a Firefighter took time to engage the terminally ill patient in conversation about his lifelong work as a geologist, offering dignity and comfort in his final hours. The family later expressed deep gratitude for the compassion

shown. Together, these events reflect the Fire Department's broader mission: technical service to the community.



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Training

The Fire Department recently conducted a training drill at a four-story apartment building located on a hillside. Because buildings like this can be difficult to access and present unique challenges during a fire, crews practiced how they would respond in a real emergency. First, Firefighters tested whether a fire engine could safely drive up the steep driveway and found that it could not. That meant crews would need to park on the street and stretch about 350 feet of hose to reach the building. They then practiced advancing up to the fourth floor and moving hose vertically through the structure. The layout of the building, especially a large top-floor apartment and hallway-style units on the middle floors, created realistic challenges involving long hose stretches, potential smoke spread, and fire movement between floors. Based on our recent history of responding to apartment fires, the Department continues to sharpen its skills and focus on multi-family residential operations to ensure we are fully prepared. This ongoing training helps Firefighters respond quickly, safely, and effectively to protect lives and property in our community

