



KENSINGTON COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE
AGENDA

Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 1:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.
Kensington Community Center - Meeting Room 3,
59 Arlington Avenue, Kensington, CA 94707 (and hybrid)

How to Submit Public Comments:

Prior to the meeting: Members of the public may submit public comment by emailing the Chair and Board Clerk by emailing: public.comment@kensingtonfire.org. by two hours prior to the meeting start time. Such comments will be noted as received and their contents orally summarized; however, if you attend the meeting, you will need to make your comment during the meeting.

During the meeting: Public comment will be taken on each agenda item, and comment on issues not on the agenda will be taken at the beginning of the meeting (*regular meetings only*). Members of the public who attend the meeting either in-person or via Zoom are allowed to provide public comment verbally with a maximum allowance of 3 minutes per individual comment, subject to the Chair's discretion. Each member of the public will be allotted the same maximum number of minutes to speak as set by the Chair, except that public speakers using interpretation assistance will be allowed to testify for twice the amount of the public testimony time limit (California Government Code section 54954.3(a)).

In-person: At points in the meeting when the meeting chair requests public comment, members of the public participating in-person can simply raise their hand to be recognized.

Via Zoom: If participating via internet, please click the "raise hand" feature located within the Zoom application screen. If connected via telephone, please dial "*9" (star, nine).

Accommodations: To enable the District to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title 1), if you need special assistance to participate, please email public.comment@kensingtonfire.org 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Agenda and supplemental materials: This agenda is available on the KFPD website under the relevant meeting date: <https://www.kensingtonfire.org/emergency-preparedness-committee>. Please note that supplemental materials will be posted on the website with the agenda as soon as they are available prior to the meeting. Additional information and/or materials may be presented at the meeting itself.

PLEASE NOTE: The District will use Zoom to allow virtual access to this meeting. This additional means of access is provided as a courtesy to the public and is not required by law. The meeting will continue to be conducted at the physical address provided above regardless of any interruption or failure of the Zoom transmission.

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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86024115293?pwd=4s6RyhzFM9xTPbWR6y9kb3TtJLg2lk.1>

Telephone Access:

(669) 444-9171

Zoom Webinar ID: 860 2411 5293

Passcode: 805980

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Directors: Director Madugo, Director Paul, Director Spath and Director Watt
Public Members: Kay Blonz, Katie Gluck, Annette McCoubrey and Paul Moss
Staff: David Aranda Interim General Manager
Consultants: Mary Morris-Mayorga
Raychel Jackson
Johnny Valenzuela, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Under “Public Comment,” the public may address the Committee on any subject not listed on the agenda. Please address your comments to the Committee and not to staff and/or the audience. Each speaker may address the Committee once under Public Comment for a limit of three minutes. The public will be given an opportunity to speak on each agenda item and once the public comment portion of any item on this agenda has been closed by the Committee, no further comment from the public will be permitted unless authorized by the Committee. The Committee cannot act on items not listed on the agenda and, therefore, cannot respond to non-agenda issues brought up under Public Comment other than to provide general information. Committee members will also have an opportunity to comment on items not on the agenda.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. Roundtable Discussion with Fire Chief Saylor and Police Chief Gancasz on Red Flag Days and CERT – Moderator David Aranda

1. [Kensington Police Chief Report](#)
2. [El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Chief Report](#)
3. [Kensington Emergency Preparedness Committee and Coordinator Report](#)

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The list of future agenda items discussed during the meeting will be summarized here.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The next regular meeting of the Emergency Preparedness Committee of the Kensington Community Service District is scheduled for March 26, 2026 at 4:00pm in person (Committee members) at the Kensington Community Center with hybrid option for attendees (guest speakers, public), unless noticed otherwise per the Brown Act.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mike Gancasz, Chief of Police



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 1, 2026
TO: GM. D. Aranda
FROM: M. Gancasz, Chief of Police *mg*
SUBJECT: Outfitting the agenda for the roundtable discussion on Wed, March 11, 2026

1. What is a Red Flag Day? Describe how it has various levels.

ANSWER: A **Red Flag Day** is when weather conditions are **so dry, hot, and windy** that a fire could start easily and spread extremely fast. It doesn't mean a fire *is happening* — it means the **ingredients for a dangerous wildfire are all in place**.

Think of it like a “high alert” for fire danger.

2. Levels of Red Flag Conditions

ANSWER: While the public usually just hears “Red Flag Warning,” fire agencies break it down into stages:

a. Fire Weather Watch (Heads-Up)

- Conditions *might* become dangerous in the next **24–72 hours**
- It's basically: “Be ready just in case.”

b. Red Flag Warning (High Danger)

- Conditions **are happening now or will happen very soon**
- Dry fuels + low humidity + strong winds
- Fire can start and spread **very quickly**

This is the alert most people recognize.

c. Extreme / Critical Fire Weather (Highest Level)

- This is when the weather is so bad that even a small spark could cause a major wildfire.
- Often linked to:

10940 San Pablo Ave • El Cerrito, CA 94530
Main: 510-526-4141 • Fax: 510-526-1028
www.kppcsd.org



- Very strong winds
- Extremely low humidity
- Very dry vegetation
- Fire agencies consider pre-positioning resources, closing parks, or restricting activities

3. Provide your recommended directions for agencies in Kensington in response to Red Flag Days. Specifically, the County Library, Public School, and KCC Classroom activity.

ANSWER:

1. County Library

A. Operational Adjustments

- **Review staffing levels** to ensure a full evacuation-capable team is present.
- Consider **reduced hours** or **closing** during Severe/Critical Red Flag conditions.
- **Suspend all outdoor events**, including reading circles, maker activities, or tabling.

B. Facility & Grounds

- Ensure all **exterior doors/windows remain closed** to prevent smoke intrusion.
- Confirm **emergency exits, alarms, and PA system** are fully functional.
- Prohibit **smoking, open flames, or any ignition sources** on library property.

C. Public Guidance

- Post **Red Flag Day signage** at the entrance.
- Offer printed or digital reminders about wildfire preparedness.
- Ask patrons to **limit use of outdoor electrical outlets** near vegetation.

D. Evacuation Readiness

- Have staff carry **grab-and-go binders** (contact lists, closure procedures).
- Review evacuation route **toward Arlington / away from canyon edges**.

2. Public School (Kensington School) CLOSED ON RED FLAG DAYS

A. Student Safety Protocols – “Alternative to closing”

- **No outdoor recess, PE, or lunch** during Red Flag Warnings.
- Keep all activities **indoors with closed doors/windows**.
- Increase indoor supervision to replace outdoor staff assignments.



B. Operational Measures

- Confirm teachers have **updated rosters and emergency cards** on hand.
- Ensure all classrooms have **charged radios or communication devices**.
- Restrict **any maintenance work** that involves power tools, blowers, or sparks.

C. Transportation & Traffic

- Coordinate with school district transportation to keep buses in accessible areas.
- If conditions are *Extreme*, consider **early release procedures** in consultation with the district.

D. Parent Communication

- Send a same-day notice explaining:
 - Why outdoor activities are suspended
 - That the school is on heightened alert
 - That pickup traffic might be adjusted

3. KCC (Kensington Community Center) – Classroom Activity

A. Indoor Activity Modifications

- **Move all classes indoors**, including fitness, dance, music, or community programming.
- Cancel or reschedule any program using:
 - Outdoor equipment
 - Cooking gear
 - BBQs or heat sources
 - Electrical devices outside

B. Facility Controls

- Close all windows/doors.
- Disable or limit HVAC systems pulling air from outside if smoke is possible.
- Verify fire extinguishers, pull stations, and AEDs are accessible.

C. Staff Preparedness

- Instructors should have immediate access to:
 - Attendance sheets
 - Emergency contacts
 - Radios or a designated point-of-contact
- Require a **quick evacuation refresher** at the beginning of each class session.

D. Community Communication

- Post signs at the Community Center explaining:
 - Outdoor areas are closed



- Classes are operating under Red Flag protocols
- Provide reassurance that indoor programs remain safe and monitored.

4. Shared Actions for All Kensington Agencies

A. Unified Messaging

All facilities should use consistent language such as:

“Today is a Red Flag Warning. Outdoor activities are suspended. We remain open indoors with heightened readiness.”

B. Coordination with Fire & Police

- Notify **El Cerrito/Kensington Fire** and **Kensington PD** of any large indoor gatherings.
- Monitor official updates from the **National Weather Service** and **CAL FIRE**.
- Increased staffing for Police Officers – two additional officers on duty

C. Staff Briefings

- Provide a **5-minute briefing** at start of shift on:
 - Evacuation routes - defined
 - Assembly areas
 - Communication roles
 - Potential early-closure triggers

D. Public-Side Reductions

- No yard work or landscaping
- No power tools outdoors
- No smoking areas outside
- No public charging of outdoor e-bikes/scooters

1. **Describe fire presence for red flag days.**

ANSWER: Maximum Staffing

2. **Describe police presence for red flag days.**

ANSWER: Maximum Staffing

3. **Parking restrictions on red flag days. When, where and how?**

ANSWER:

A. WHEN

Parking restrictions should automatically activate under **either** of the following conditions:



1. National Weather Service Red Flag Warning

- Restrictions go into effect **at the time the Warning begins.**
- They remain in effect **until the Warning expires.**

2. Local Fire Chief or Duty Fire Chief Declaration

- If weather or fire behavior escalates faster than NWS notifications.
- Immediate activation authorized for public safety.

Hours of Enforcement

- **24 hours a day** during the Red Flag period.
- No grace period — full compliance required.

B. WHERE (Specific to Kensington)

Because Kensington's hazard profile includes:

- steep, narrow streets,
- limited turn-around space,
- heavy vegetation, and
- a single primary evacuation spine (Arlington Ave),

Parking restrictions should target the areas where a single parked vehicle could **block evacuation or fire response.**

1. Narrow Hillside Streets

Any street where **two fire engines cannot pass simultaneously**, typically:

- Streets below Arlington that wrap around the hills
- Streets with blind curves, pinch points, or no shoulders

Examples (not exhaustive):

- Beloit Ave
- Coventry Rd
- Lenox Rd
- Oberlin Ave
- Purdue Ave
- Lake Dr
- Sunset Dr
- Amherst Ave

(These would be listed in a final ordinance, but this gives the board the picture.)



2. Designated “Fire Access Routes”

- Posted no-parking zones already marked as “**Fire Lane**”
- Any road segment identified by Kensington Fire as a required access line
- Parking prohibited **on both sides**, even if one side is normally legal

3. Evacuation Routes and Choke Points

Areas where stalled traffic could trap residents:

- **Arlington Ave**
- Approaches to **Colusa Circle**
- All intersections connecting to major exits (Arlington → El Cerrito or Berkeley)

4. Dead-End Roads and Cul-de-Sacs

- No parking allowed along the approach to cul-de-sacs
- Ensures fire engines can enter, turn around, and exit without delay

C. HOW (Implementation & Enforcement)

1. Public Notification

A simple, predictable system:

- **Text Alerts** (Kensington PD / CWS)
- Posting on the **KCSD website** and social channels
- Temporary **Red Flag street signage** at key intersections
- Optional: automated phone tree for seniors

2. Signage

Permanent signs installed throughout designated roads:

- “**NO PARKING – RED FLAG DAYS**”
- “**FIRE ACCESS ROUTE – NO PARKING DURING WARNINGS**”

Signs should be reflective and placed at:

- entrances to narrow streets
- every block length
- every major turn

3. Enforcement

- Enforced by **Kensington Police**
- Begin with **warnings** during the first 30–60 days of program rollout



- After that:
 - **Citation** for violation
 - **Immediate tow** if vehicle blocks emergency access

4. Resident Accommodation

- Residents should move vehicles to:
 - driveways
 - garages
 - wider streets not designated as restricted

Kensington’s small geography makes this feasible.

5. Coordination with Fire

- Fire department identifies and updates the official **Red Flag Parking Restriction Map**
- Annual review before fire season
- Map posted online and shared with the community

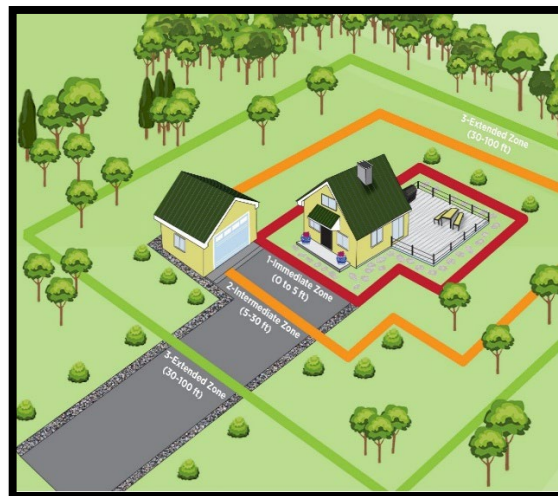
D. Why Parking Restrictions Matter



A single improperly parked vehicle on a hillside road can:

- Prevent fire engines from entering
- Prevent residents from evacuating
- Cause **complete gridlock** when seconds count
- Force firefighters to abandon attempts protect homes

Parking restrictions are **one of the least expensive and most effective** wildfire-mitigation policies in a hillside community.



to



4. *Recommendations for marked evacuation routes.*

ANSWER:

Purpose of Marked Evacuation Routes

Kensington's terrain — narrow streets, steep grades, vegetation, and limited exits — makes **clear, consistent evacuation routing** essential.

Marked evacuation routes provide:

- A predictable path for residents under stress
- A guaranteed access/egress lane for fire and police
- A way to prevent choke-points and gridlock
- A unified message across all public agencies and facilities

B. Core Principles of Evacuation Route Design

1. **Simplicity** – Residents must be able to follow signs without hesitation.
2. **Continuity** – Routes need to connect seamlessly from neighborhoods → collectors → major exits.
3. **Fire–Police Alignment** – All markings must match operational plans.
4. **Redundancy** – Ensure alternatives if one route is blocked.

C. Recommended Primary Evacuation Routes

These reflect Kensington's geography and the real constraints of fire spread and traffic movement.

1. Arlington Avenue (Primary North–South Spine)

- This is the **main evacuation corridor** for the community.
- Should be marked consistently from **Grizzly Peak** → **Moeser Lane**.

2. Colusa Avenue (Secondary Evacuation Route)

- Serves residents in west-zone neighborhoods.
- Connects directly to El Cerrito and Berkeley.

3. Beloit → Coventry → Purdue → Lenox (Upper-Hills Loop)

- These hillside neighborhoods require **pre-marked directionality** toward Arlington.
- Marked downhill flow prevents two-way traffic collisions during evacuation.

4. Sunset → Highland → Amherst → Lake Drive (Lower-Hills Flow)

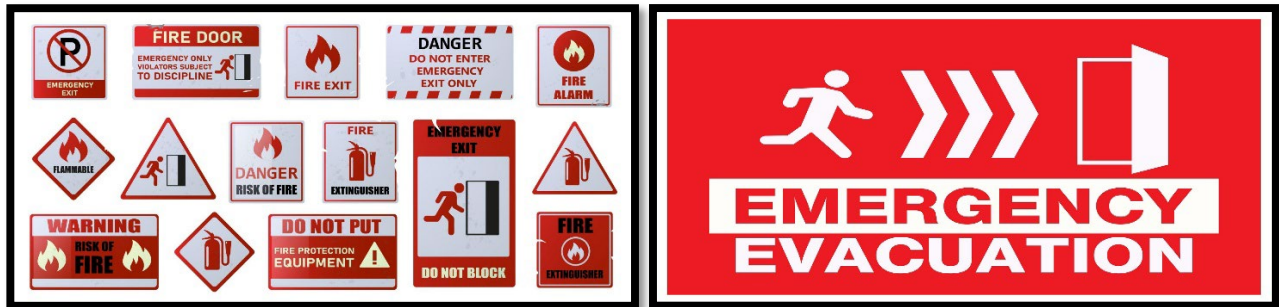
- Routes should funnel residents **westward** toward Colusa and the flatlands.



5. Kensington Park / Community Center Zone

- Pre-mark signage routing vehicles **south onto Arlington.**
- Prevents gridlock during community-center events or school release.

D. Recommended Evacuation Signage System



1. Permanent Reflective Signage

- Install **high-visibility reflective green or blue** arterial signs.
- Arrows should show:
 - **Direction of travel**
 - **Downhill priority** toward major exits
- Signs placed at:
 - Every major intersection
 - Every directional turn
 - High-risk hillside zones



2. Roadway Markings (Optional but Recommended)

- Painted symbols or arrows on pavement:
 - **“EVAC ROUTE”**
 - Directional arrows
- Helps nighttime visibility when smoke reduces sightlines.

3. Temporary Deployment Signs

Portable folding signs for:

- Roadblocks
- Red Flag Days
- Power shutoffs
- Actual evacuations
Placed by PD or Public Works to direct mass movement.



E. Agency Coordination Requirements

1. Kensington Police

- Owns operational control of traffic flow and street closures.
- Must have a pre-written **evacuation traffic plan**, including officers' positions.

2. Kensington Fire

- Confirms fire-behavior based directionality:
 - **Downwind** vs. **upwind** routes
 - Areas likely to be cut off due to fire movement

3. Public Works

- Maintains signage and markings.
- Performs vegetation clearance around signposts.

4. KCC, Library, and School

- Must have pre-planned exit directions for staff, parents, and students.
- All facility handbooks should reflect the same route maps.

Public Communication Strategy

1. Release a Community Evacuation Map

A simple, color-coded map showing:

- Primary routes
- Secondary routes
- Temporary closure points
- Community assembly points (if needed)

2. Annual Wildfire Preparedness Mailer

Send before fire season each year.

3. Neighborhood Workshops

Offer voluntary briefings at the Community Center.

4. Digital Integration

Post maps on:

- KCSD website



- Fire Department website
- School & KCC platforms

G. Special Recommendations

1. One-Way Traffic on Steep Loops During Evacuation

For neighborhoods with narrow roads (Beloit, Purdue, Lenox, Sunset), pre-designate **one-way evacuation flow** to prevent collision or gridlock.

2. Gate Access Pre-Checks

Ensure:

- All emergency gates are unlocked or Knox-key accessible
- No vegetation blocking emergency-use paths

3. Parking Restrictions Aligned With Evac Routes

All streets designated as evacuation routes must also be **Red Flag No-Parking zones**.

H. Key Takeaway

A marked, unified evacuation system transforms:

- confusion into **clarity**,
- hesitation into **movement**,
- risk into **survival advantage**.

Kensington's terrain leaves no room for delay — a well-signed evacuation network saves lives.

5. Provide your recommendations on a coordinated effort to provide methods in notifying residents of how to prepare for red flag days and where to turn for information, i.e., social media, handouts, etc.

ANSWER:

Core Objectives

1. **Ensure every resident understands what a Red Flag Day means**
2. **Provide clear instructions on what to do before, during, and after Red Flag events**
3. **Create consistent messaging across Police, Fire, KCC, Library, and School**
4. **Use multiple communication channels to reach all demographics**
5. **Drive residents toward official, trusted sources of information**



B. Primary Notification Methods

1. Countywide Community Warning System (CWS) – Primary Alert

- Residents should be reminded to **register**.
- Pushes text, email, and automated calls during Red Flag Warnings.

Action:

- Promote CWS monthly through all agencies.
- Include QR codes on signs, handouts, and websites.

2. Kensington Police Social Media (Centralized Posting)

Use **Kensington Police Department** X/Twitter and Facebook as the **main outward-facing message center**.

Posts should include:

- “Red Flag Day in effect”
- Parking restrictions
- Evacuation route reminders
- Official map and resource links

All other agencies **share or repost** — not create independent versions.

3. Kensington Fire Department Website & Push Posts

Include:

- Fire danger level
- Preparedness tips
- Vegetation management reminders
- “What to do today” checklists for residents

4. Email Blasts From All Public Agencies

Every agency sends the same short template message:

- KPD
- KFD
- KCC
- Library
- Kensington School

Unified wording avoids panic or misinformation.



5. Roadside Electronic Message Boards (Optional but Strongly Recommended)

Deploy portable LED signs during:

- Red Flag Warnings
- PSPS (power shutoff) events
- Extreme fire weather

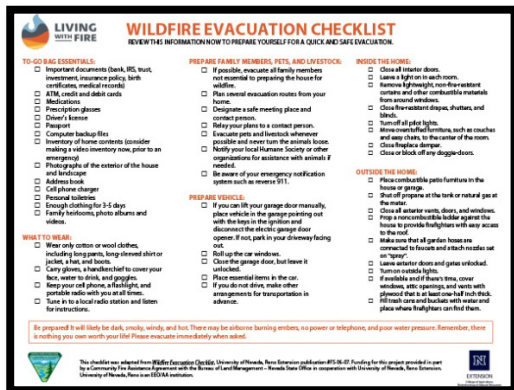
Located at:

- Arlington Ave
- Colusa Circle
- Community Center entrance

Example:

“RED FLAG DAY – NO OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES – SEE KPD WEBSITE FOR INFO.”

C. Public Education Tools (Year-Round)



1. Biannual Wildfire Preparedness Mailer

Delivered by mail or door-hangers. Includes:

- What a Red Flag Day means
- Parking restrictions
- Evacuation routes
- Home-hardening checklist
- How to sign up for alerts
- Map of designated evacuation paths
- Red Flag Day behavior expectations

2. Handouts at Library, KCC, and School

Each facility keeps:



- Brochures
- Quick-reference cards
- Red Flag magnets with QR codes
- “Where to get info” handouts

These should be consistent and updated annually.

3. Annual Community Safety Meeting

Hosted by KPD, Fire, and KCC:

- Live Q&A
- Demonstrations of go-bags, evacuation prep
- Review of maps
- Recorded and posted online for those who can’t attend

4. Neighborhood Captains Program (Optional Enhancement)

Train trusted neighborhood volunteers block-by-block to:

- Disseminate information
- Assist elderly residents
- Reinforce evacuation instructions

This model is used successfully in other high-risk WUI areas.

5. Red Flag Information Kiosks

Install small weatherproof kiosks at:

- Community Center
- Library
- Kensington Park Shows:
 - Current fire danger level
 - Red Flag status
 - Evacuation maps
 - Website/QR links

D. “Where to Turn for Information” – Unified Guidance for Residents

Residents should be directed to **ONLY** these official sources:

1. **KPD website** – central hub
2. **KPD social media** – immediate notifications
3. **Kensington Fire website** – fire behavior and preparedness
4. **CWS (Community Warning System)** – emergency alerts





5. **CAL FIRE & NWS** – statewide fire-weather data
6. **Printed emergency handouts** at all Kensington facilities

All public-facing materials should include:

- Website URLs
- QR codes
- Social media handles
- CWS enrollment instructions

E. Workflow for Red Flag Day Messaging

Here's how it should work in practice:

1. **NWS issues Red Flag Warning**
2. **Fire Chief notifies KPD**
3. **KPD posts official Red Flag message**
4. *All agencies immediately share or repost that message*
5. **Email blast** goes out (same wording for all)
6. Community Center, Library, and School implement their protocols
7. Portable LED signs activated (if available)
8. Staff at all facilities post Red Flag signage

This ensures **one voice, one message**, community-wide.

F. Key Takeaway -A Red Flag Day notification system must be **simple, coordinated, and trustworthy**. If the public knows where to look — and the message is consistent — panic drops, compliance rises, and safety improves across the board.

CERT:

A. Why CERT Needs Reenergizing

CERT is most effective when:

- Members feel supported
- Training is consistent
- Leadership is structured
- Agencies take ownership
- The community sees real purpose

Right now, CERT in Kensington has the resources and community interest — it just needs **organization, visibility, and a clear chain of command**.

B. Recommended 5-Phase Rebuild Plan



PHASE 1 — Reestablish Command & Oversight (Immediate)

1. Designate a CERT Program Manager

Recommended role:

- A KPD sergeant or lieutenant
- OR a Battalion Chief from Fire
- OR a shared Public Safety Coordinator position

The Program Manager:

- Oversees CERT activities
- Approves training
- Serves as liaison to PD and Fire
- Provides monthly updates to the board

2. Establish a CERT Leadership Team (Volunteers)

Roles:

- Team Leader
- Assistant Leader
- Logistics Coordinator
- Training/Records Coordinator
- Communications Lead

Select from experienced, reliable volunteers.

PHASE 2 — Define Reporting Structure

Recommended Reporting Model

CERT → Program Manager (PD/Fire) → Public Safety Committee / Joint Board

Why this works:

- Keeps CERT connected to actual emergency operations
- Ensures training follows real PD/Fire expectations
- Allows consistent briefings at board meetings

Who CERT Should NOT Report To

- Library, School, or KCC
- Individual volunteers
- External nonprofits



CERT must stay tied to **public safety**, not general community programming.

PHASE 3 — Training & Recertification

1. Restart Quarterly CERT Trainings

Sessions should include:

- First Aid / CPR
- Fire extinguisher use
- Evacuation support
- Traffic control for Red Flag Days
- Radio communications
- Shelter setup & basic logistics
- Damage assessment & reporting

2. Annual CERT Academy (Flagship Training)

A two-day intensive course:

- One day classroom
- One day hands-on practical scenarios
- Final drill with KPD and Fire

3. Integrate CERT Into Real Public Safety Drills

CERT should participate in:

- Red Flag Day traffic simulations
- Evacuation route dry runs
- Community-wide readiness events
- Communications (ham radio) tests

This increases skill, morale, and credibility.

PHASE 4 — Community Engagement & Recruitment





1. Launch CERT Visibility Campaign

Use:

- Social media
- KPD website
- Flyers at Library and KCC
- School newsletters
- Community Center posters

2. Hold Two Annual CERT Events

- Spring "Be Ready" Day
- Fall Wildfire Preparedness Fair

CERT runs demos and signs up new volunteers.

3. Equip CERT Members

Uniform package:

- CERT vest
- CERT helmet or ballcap
- ID card
- Basic go-bag

A professional appearance improves turnout and trust.

PHASE 5 — Organizational Format: Is 501(c)(3) Recommended?

Option A — *Do Not Form a 501(c)(3) (Recommended)*

Maintaining nonprofit status is:

- Expensive
- Administrative
- Requires accounting, tax filing, insurance

You gain:

- Ability to fundraise

But you lose:

- Tight integration with PD/Fire
- Operational simplicity
- Direct command structure



For a small community like Kensington, CERT is most effective operating **within public safety**, not as an external nonprofit.

Option B — Form a 501(c)(3) (Not Recommended, but possible)

Useful ONLY if:

- CERT wants to raise large independent funds
- Plans to buy trucks, trailers, or major equipment
- Wants autonomy from the district

Drawbacks:

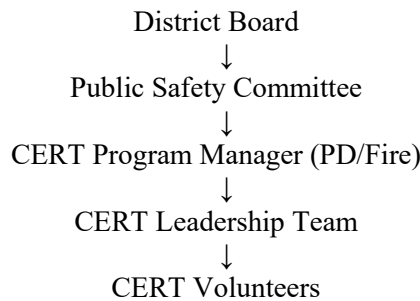
- Splits authority
- Disconnects CERT from fire/police command
- Higher liability exposure

Conclusion: A nonprofit model is not the best fit for Kensington.

C. Final Recommended Structure

CERT remains an operational extension of KPD/Fire.

Chart:



This maintains:

- Clear communication
- Unified command
- Realistic training
- Operational discipline

D. Strategic Goals for 2026

1. Rebuild CERT roster to 50–70 active volunteers
2. Establish quarterly training calendar
3. Conduct two evacuation drills using CERT



4. Publish the first Kensington CERT Operations Manual
5. Fully integrate CERT into Red Flag Day protocols

E. Key Takeaway

Reenergizing CERT isn't about creating a nonprofit — it's about **building a disciplined, trained, reliable community support force** that works hand-in-hand with PD and Fire. With the right structure and leadership, CERT becomes a real asset during Red Flag Days, evacuations, medical events, and community operations.

El-Cerrito – Kensington Fire Chief Report

1. What is a Red Flag Day? Describe how it has various levels.

1. 1) What “Red Flag days” are

- a. “Red Flag day” is common shorthand, but the formal National Weather Service products are a **Fire Weather Watch** and a **Red Flag Warning**. These are used when **dry fuels plus dangerous weather** create the potential for extreme fire behavior—things like **strong winds, very low humidity, dry thunderstorms, lightning, or a dry frontal passage**. Local criteria vary by forecast office, because each NWS office sets them with local fire and land-management agencies based on local fuels and fire behavior. Final authority to issue the watch or warning still rests with the NWS.
- b. **Who declares them, and when?**
 - i. The **National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office** issues them. A **Fire Weather Watch** is generally used when there is a **high potential** for a Red Flag event **18 to 96 hours in advance**. A **Red Flag Warning** is issued when critical fire weather is **impending or already occurring**, usually when there is high confidence the criteria will occur **within 48 hours or less**.
- c. **Why they are declared**
 - i. They are declared to give fire agencies time to **staff up, reposition resources, and prepare for rapid fire growth**, because under those conditions even a small ignition can become difficult to control and threaten life and property.

2. 2) What a PDS is

- a. A **PDS** stands for **Particularly Dangerous Situation**. In California fire weather, a PDS is **not a separate warning product**. It is special wording placed **inside a Red Flag Warning** by NWS offices to highlight a fire-weather event that is **rare, exceptional, and especially dangerous** to the public and the firefighting community.
- b. **Who declares a PDS, when, and why?**
 - i. Again, the **NWS Weather Forecast Office** issues it, typically after coordination with affected agencies. It is used when Red Flag conditions are not just present, but are **greatly exceeded** or are expected to be **near record levels**—in other words, when officials want to clearly communicate that this is an **unusually severe, high-consequence fire weather event**.

3. 3) Why winds over 45 mph can trigger “leave early” guidance

- a. Winds over 45 mph are the one common element to catastrophic fires that have permanently changed communities.
- b. This part is important: **45 mph is not a universal national “leave early” rule**. It is better understood as a **local risk-management trigger** used by some agencies

and communities in wildfire-prone areas. In Berkeley and El Cerrito, for example, the Fire Department’s **Extreme Fire Weather** concept is tied to an NWS forecast of **very fast winds and very low humidity during a Red Flag Warning**, and the City recommends residents make plans to **leave the hills during those periods** because fires under those conditions can become catastrophic very quickly.

- c. **Why 45 mph matters operationally**
 - i. Winds in that range are strong enough to create **serious compounding problems** even before they meet the higher National Weather Service “high wind” thresholds. Related wildfire-safety frameworks in Alameda County/PG&E use **sustained winds above about 25 mph and gusts above about 45 mph** as one factor for Public Safety Power Shutoff decisions, because high winds can cause **branches and debris to hit power lines**, damage equipment, and start fires. Separately, the NWS notes that **40–50 mph winds can cause isolated wind damage**, and even **45 mph gusts** are enough for many offices to issue a **Wind Advisory** because they can blow around unsecured objects and make driving difficult.
 - ii. In addition, the fire service typically loses its ability to use aircraft in a fire attack when winds are above 45 mph. During a wildland fire in our area, aircraft are our primary response tool.
- d. **The practical reason for “leave early” at that point**
 - i. In hillside communities with limited roads, the goal is to move people **before** an ignition happens under wind conditions that can cause **fast fire spread, ember cast, falling branches, blocked roads, outages, and stalled evacuations**. That is why local “leave early” guidance is often set at a more conservative level than formal NWS high-wind warning criteria.

4. Provide your recommended directions for agencies in Kensington in response to Red Flag Days. Specifically, the County Library, Public School, and KCC Classroom activity.

1. **Recommended Direction for Agencies in Kensington During Red Flag Days:**
2. During standard **Red Flag Days**, the recommendation is for agencies to **closely monitor weather and fire conditions**, remain in communication with public safety officials, and be prepared to adjust operations if conditions worsen.
- 3.
4. During **Particularly Dangerous Situations (PDS)** and **Red Flag events with sustained winds exceeding 45 miles per hour**, the recommendation is to **close public buildings and suspend public activities**, including the **County Library**,

Kensington Hilltop School, and KCC classroom activities. This approach is intended to reduce risk to the public and limit exposure during conditions that could rapidly threaten life safety and hinder evacuation.

5. Describe fire presence for red flag days.

1. Fire department presence on Red Flag days varies depending on whether the **California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)** recommends upstaffing for local fire agencies. On a lower-level Red Flag day, there may be **no additional staffing**, and the fire department may operate under its **normal staffing model** while closely monitoring weather and fire conditions. During more severe Red Flag events, particularly those involving **extreme winds**, Cal OES may recommend that local agencies **upstaff additional resources**, with that added staffing funded through Cal OES. Those recommendations are generally based on a combination of **wind, humidity, and fuel conditions**. The El Cerrito Fire Department makes every effort to follow Cal OES upstaffing recommendations. If Cal OES does not recommend upstaffing, but local conditions still present a significant threat, the department may choose to **increase staffing on its own** based on operational need.

2. Describe police presence for red flag days.

- a. **Police presence on Red Flag days depends on the severity of the event.** On a standard Red Flag day, no additional police staffing may be necessary beyond normal operations. However, during a **Particularly Dangerous Situation (PDS)** or a Red Flag event with **sustained winds exceeding 45 miles per hour**, it may be appropriate to place **all available police personnel on duty**. This allows the department to support potential evacuations, manage traffic and access control, and provide security in neighborhoods that have been evacuated or where residents have chosen to leave early, helping to protect public safety and deter looting.

3. Parking restrictions on red flag days. When, where and how?

- a. **Parking restrictions on Red Flag days are intended primarily to support emergency access, not evacuation modeling.** As such, they will largely be

treated separately from the Kensington–El Cerrito evacuation study. The purpose of these restrictions is to ensure that fire engines and other emergency vehicles have an unobstructed path through Kensington’s narrow roadways during periods of elevated fire danger. The goal is to avoid situations where responding fire apparatus are delayed or blocked by parked vehicles while traffic is also moving downhill on constrained or one-way streets.

- b. These Red Flag parking restrictions would be implemented on any **Red Flag Warning day declared by the National Weather Service for Weather Zone 508**, which includes Kensington. Notification would be provided through posted signage, whether permanent or temporary, identifying the streets subject to restriction. In practice, Red Flag days in Kensington are **relatively rare**, typically occurring only a few days per year, if at all.

4. Recommendations for marked evacuation routes.

- a. We should **not** establish permanently marked evacuation routes in Kensington. Marked evacuation routes are generally most appropriate for areas facing **predictable, location-specific hazards**, such as tsunamis or volcanic events, where the direction of travel is more consistent and known in advance. Kensington’s primary hazards—**earthquakes, wildfires, and landslides**—are different. These incidents can rapidly change road conditions, block access, or make previously safe routes impassable. In those situations, predesignated evacuation routes could unintentionally direct residents **toward the hazard** or into a **dead-end or blocked roadway**.
- b. For that reason, evacuation in Kensington should remain **flexible and incident-driven**, based on real-time conditions, situational awareness, and direction from emergency personnel.

5. Provide your recommendations on a coordinated effort to provide methods in notifying residents of how to prepare for red flag days and where to turn for information, i.e., social media, handouts, etc.

1. Make CWS the primary life-safety alert channel.

Contra Costa’s Community Warning System (CWS) should be the primary source for urgent, protective-action messaging because it already sends alerts by phone call, text, email, website, social media, and sirens when there is an immediate threat. Residents

should be urged to register all cell and VoIP numbers, and to save the CWS callback number so alerts do not get ignored as spam.

2. Use a “single message, many channels” approach for Red Flag preparedness.

Once the National Weather Service issues a Fire Weather Watch or Red Flag Warning, the same plain-language message should be pushed through: City/District websites, City/District social media, school email/text systems, library notices, KCC class notices, and email newsletters. Kensington Fire already directs residents to know their evacuation zone and monitor CWS, Nixle, and Watch Duty, while El Cerrito already uses red flags at fire stations when NWS extreme fire weather warnings are in effect.

3. Build a standing annual education campaign before fire season.

Each year, before peak fire weather, agencies should distribute a simple Red Flag Ready handout through schools, the County Library, KCC classrooms, newsletters, and community events. That handout should explain: what a Fire Weather Watch and Red Flag Warning mean, how to sign up for CWS, where to check official fire weather, what to do on Red Flag days, how to prepare a go-bag, and why residents with mobility or timing needs should consider leaving early. Kensington’s existing preparedness materials already emphasize CWS registration, go-bags, loaded vehicles, multiple evacuation routes, and early evacuation when needed, and the District already has a recurring community publication in The Fire Plug that can support this effort.

4. Assign clear agency roles so the messaging stays consistent.

I recommend that the district own the preparedness message and Red Flag readiness guidance; Police own urgent warning, evacuation, and access-control messaging; and Public Works support roadside signage and any traffic or access notices. This aligns with the City’s Emergency Operations Plan, which assigns Police responsibility for emergency public warning and alerts and evacuation operations, while Public Works supports warnings, traffic movement, and access restrictions.

5. Give residents one simple “Where to Turn for Information” box on every notice.

Every flyer, social post, school email, library notice, and KCC announcement should end with the same box:

- CWS = official life-safety alerts and evacuation messages
- NWS Fire Weather = official weather watches/warnings
- Kensington Fire / El Cerrito websites and social media = local readiness guidance and operational updates
- Watch Duty / Nixle = secondary situational awareness tools

This reduces confusion and reinforces one consistent public-information structure.

Bottom line: residents should not have to guess where to go for information. A coordinated program should use CWS as the official emergency alert system, NWS as the official weather trigger, and local agencies, schools, the library, and KCC as amplifiers of the same message. That combination gives the community both the official warning and the practical preparation guidance they need.

6. Reenergize CERT. Recommendations for the format, i.e., 501C3? Reports to?

- a. CERT in Kensington would benefit from a more formal organizational structure, beginning with the designation of a **CERT Area Coordinator** and the establishment of a **501(c)(3) nonprofit partner** to support administration and fundraising. Under the Area Coordinator, the program should include **three deputy coordinators** to assist with training, operational readiness, and the coordination of objectives during major incidents.
- b. CERT serves a critical role in the community during disasters and large-scale emergencies. While it is not a substitute for the fire department, it functions as an organized **community emergency response resource**, consistent with FEMA's CERT model, by providing trained volunteers who can support preparedness, communication, and neighborhood-level response.
- c. At present, the El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Department provides **basic CERT training** for interested community members. However, there is currently **no formal CERT structure in Kensington** that allows the group to apply for grants, receive or manage funds, or coordinate with the Fire Department in a formal and sustainable way. Establishing this structure would strengthen community resilience and improve CERT's ability to support the community during major events.