KENSINGTON
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

APRIL 2022 KENSINGTON EVACUATION DRILL

OPERATIONAL REPORT AND SURVEY RESULTS

Background

In March 2022, the Kensington Fire Protection District Board of Directors approved Fire Chief Pigoni's plan to execute a simulated evacuation drill. This plan aimed to test the Community Warning System, Zonehaven, and observe traffic impacts through the newly established evacuation route via Sunset View Cemetery. A collaborative effort between Kensington Police and Kensington Fire Protection District planned the drill and launched a robust public awareness campaign to increase community resiliency and emergency preparedness.

Objectives

The Kensington Evacuation Drill presented a unique opportunity to observe and collect data, improve communication, increase direct contact points among Kensington residents, and find areas of needed improvement for public safety agencies and community members. The Drill was structured to focus on the following objectives.

Public Education

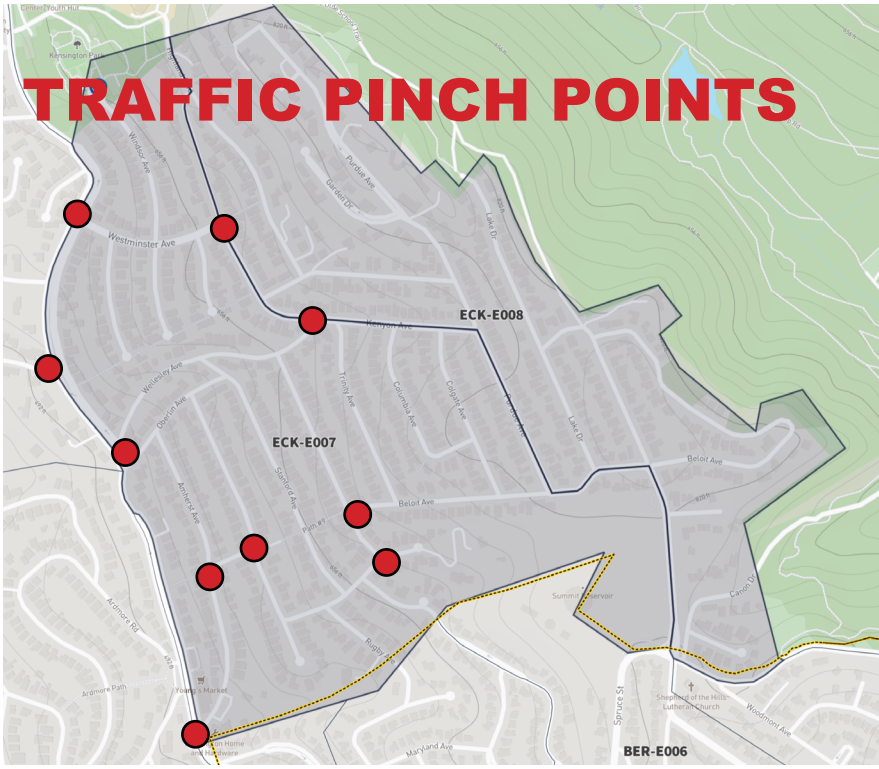
- Alerts & Notifications
- Emergency Preparedness
- Evacuation Routes

Test of the County Community Warning System (CWS)

- Obtain data through participation and registration rates.
- Provide first responders an opportunity to initiate an emergency alert in coordination with CWS, and to see the response rate in real-time in Kensington.

Evaluation of traffic flow on critical streets

- Beloit @ Cambridge
- Cambridge @Yale
- Yale@ Princeton
- Princeton @ Amherst
- Amherst @ Arlington (North or South)
- Kenyon @ Wellesley
- Wellesley / Oberlin @ Arlington
- Kenyon @ Westminster
- Westminster @ Arlington (North or South)
- Sunset @ Sunset View Cemetery



"Readiness & Resiliency"

- Go Bag Preparation
- Home Preparedness
- Communication Tools

Zonehaven "Know Your Zone"

- Debut Zonehaven platform
- Have residents learn their zone

Public Awareness Campaign

The public awareness campaign targeted two geographic groups. The first group included Residents in Zone 7 and 8, and the second had all other Kensington residents. The challenge of this campaign was to promote voluntary participation while prompting a different call to action for three separate areas in the community. The most significant challenge was to keep the attention of community members that reside outside of Zone 7 and 8. The likelihood of losing their attention was high as the evacuation drill did not include their specific areas of Kensington.

Signs and banners placed on Arlington Avenue and Amherst ensured any residents traveling into the targeted zones knew about the planned evacuation drill. The signage included a link to the campaign URL on the Fire District website (kensingtonfire.org/drill).

Door hangers targeted individual households in Zones 7 and 8. Hangers were distributed to every home with the help of Fire Department Personnel and community volunteers.

Residents received two publications to announce the Kensington Evacuation Drill. The Kensington Outlook provided front-page coverage in the April 2022 edition. The Fire Plug was mailed with a public notice and a front-page article detailing the evacuation drill plan.

This campaign was designed for all platforms to lead to the Kensington Fire Protection District Website via an easy-to-remember URL(kensingtonfire.org/drill). Once the campaign launched online, other K-Groups reshared the posts, further increasing the campaign's reach and increasing social media followers. A short survey at the top of the drill's website landing page allowed residents to provide their CWS registration status and register for KFPD email notifications.

On Friday, April 8th, 2022, the National Weather Service declared a Red Flag Warning for parts of Northern California, including the East Bay Hills. The Red Flag Warning was an opportune time to send a notification to KFPD Red Flag email subscribers that signed up through the Evacuation Drill Campaign. As a result of the drill campaign and the Red Flag Warning, over 450 residents subscribed for KFPD email notifications.

Incident Command Mission

Conduct an Emergency Evacuation Fire Drill involving Kensington Zonehaven XCC-ECK-007 and Kensington Zonehaven XCC-ECK-008. The mission is to: Educate the Public on Emergency Preparedness, test the Contra Costa County Community Warning System (CWS), evaluate the traffic flow on critical streets, and obtain data to enhance safety and improve our readiness in the event of an actual incident.

Simulation

The Kensington Fire Protection District has identified high-priority areas within Kensington and will work with those areas to coordinate evacuation exercises. These high-priority areas face a higher threat due to several variables such as limited access and proximity to wildland areas (as noted in the Traffic Consultant's Report.)
For this drill, the Kensington Evacuation Drill will be responding to a wildfire originating in Tilden Park with a westward projection toward Kensington.
Community members residing east of Arlington Avenue and South of Hilltop School are in the test zone. The fire department will be using Zonehaven to manage the evacuation drill. The zones targeted in this drill will be ECK-E007 and ECK-E008.

Participation

114* out of 339 vehicles identified in Zonehaven XCC-ECK-008 participated, a 33% participation rate based on daytime zone occupancy. Residents outside the targeted evacuation zone participated in the evacuation drill, which is not reflected in the count coming from zone ECK-008.

There were multiple agencies involved including:

- Albany PD Dispatch
- BART PD
- Contra Costa Sheriff's Department
- El Cerrito PD
- El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Department
- Kensington PD
- Office of Emergency Services
- Richmond Fire Department
- Rodeo-Hercules Fire Department

13 community volunteers assisted in the evacuation drill, primarily at the check-in location at El Cerrito Plaza BART. Representatives of KFPD, KPPCSD, and KPOA were among the volunteers.

Community Feedback

The Kensington Evacuation Drill deployed two surveys. The first survey focused on general preparedness, which went out to everyone that received the CWS Alert. The other was deployed at the El Cerrito Plaza BART Station parking lot. Only those who participated in the physical evacuation provided feedback on the evacuation route. 115 survey responses were captured at the evacuation checkpoint. The following are the participation rates in the evacuation listed by point of origin.

20% Purdue
14.8% Lake
13% Kenyon
11.3% Highland
8.7% Beloit
8.7% Willamette
3.5% Garden
3.5% Lakeside
3.5% Los Altos
3.5% Parkside
2.6% Plateau
1.7 Amherst
1.7 Canon
1.7 Grizzly Peak
1.7% Yale
0.9% Arlington
0.9% Cambridge
0.9% Dewey
0.9% Trinity

84.3% of evacuation drill participants used the cemetery route.
15.7% of evacuation drill participants used other routes.

The following is a consolidated selection of comments provided by Kensington residents that participated in the evacuation drill.

- Parking Orientation changes are requested to improve traffic flow, especially on Sunset Drive.
- Traffic direction at Fairmont / Colusa to improve flow out of the cemetery.
- Provide explicit volunteer instructions at the check-in site to improve efficiency.
- Provide additional signage along the evacuation route, primarily through the cemetery.
- Some residents had difficulty registering with CWS online.
- Arlington is a bottleneck that needs additional traffic flow solutions.
- Willamette should be established as a One-Way to improve traffic flow.
- Have additional check-in attendants with tablets to take information from residents.
- Notifications that come through as an "Amber Alert" style would be more attention-getting.
- Notifications came through inconsistently on different registered devices in the same household.
- CWS calls were marked as "possible spam."
- The use of Fire engine sirens would help alert the community.
- Develop a map of all available evacuation routes for Kensington.
- Provide an option to answer that" I have received the alert" and want not to receive any additional alerts.

Several residents of zone ECK-008 received messages intended for zone ECK-007. The evacuation order was not received. This confused residents who anticipated an evacuation order but were told: "no action required."

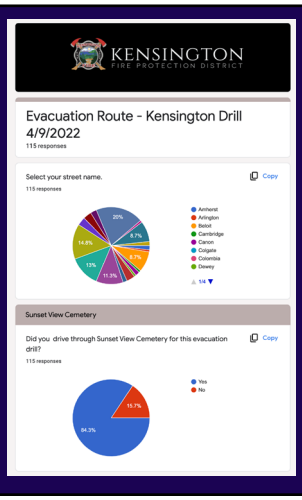
The following is an overview of data from the survey deployed through the CWS Test Alert. 287 responses were collected from this survey focusing on general emergency preparedness.

- 96% have registered for alerts
- 41% have spoken to neighbors about emergency preparedness
- 55% have established evacuation routes, family reunification plans
- 67% have packed go bags and prepared shelter in place supplies
- 89% have affirmed they are willing to check on neighbors before leaving in vehicle during an evacuation.
- 13% have a condition or situation which requires additional time or assistance before leaving in a vehcile for an evacuation.
- 64% are not participating in an organized block or neighbrohood.
- 77% would like to be added to KFPD email distribution lists.

To view the complete evacuation drill survey responses and data, visit:

Evacuation Route Survey
www.kensingtonfire.org/drillreport

General Preparedness Survey
www.kensingtonfire.org/preparednessreport



Recommendations

Continue working with the County and PD to implement traffic and parking changes throughout Kensington. Promote community and block-level engagements to foster buy-in for parking etiquette practices aligned with parking and traffic optimization plans.

Establish a standard practice with El Cerrito for Fairmont/ Colusa and communicate the expectation to the community. Share findings with surrounding agencies and develop best practices for concise messaging that do not lead to confusion.

Designate all routes out of Kensington as Evacuation routes with placed permanent evacuation route signage. Publish a map of routes for Kensington, which includes all possible routes out of the community. Develop a campaign that ensures community members understand all routes may serve as their evacuation route if emergency conditions compromise their preferred route.

Conduct Registration "Office hours" during public events to assist with CWS registration. Enlist volunteers to provide registration assistance at community events or by appointment—train community members with CWS resources and literature.

Promote the KFPD Communication toolkit so residents can know the information options available to them.

Encourage residents to add the CWS contact card to devices preventing the risk of emergency calls categorized as possible spam calls.

Recruit additional volunteer resources for the Check-In station. Develop self-check stations with QR codes and simple instructions to efficiently process a large number of residents. Allocate volunteer attendants to stations with tablets and Paper forms to cater to individuals that need assistance or prefer physical surveys.

Share the complete survey responses and data with CWS and surrounding agencies to develop process improvements and best practices.

Integrate a community festival at the evacuation drill checkpoint. Invite vendors and neighboring agencies to participate.

Hire or enlist volunteer photographers and videographers to capture content for use in public awareness campaigns.