



# EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

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**DATE:** September 3, 2021

**TO:** Bill Hansell: General Manager

**FROM:** Michael Pigoni: Fire Chief

**RE:** **Fire Chief's Report for the September 2021 Fire District Board Meeting**

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## **July Incident Run Reports**

There were 25 incidents in Kensington for the month of July which was a decrease of 9 calls over the previous month. Total incidents for Station 65 in July were 58 calls which was a decrease of 11 calls over the previous month. Overall, the El Cerrito / Kensington Fire Department responded to 304 calls for service during the month.

## **August Incident Run Reports**

There were 39 incidents in Kensington for the month of August which was an increase of 14 calls over the previous month. Total incidents for Station 65 in August were 63 calls which was an increase of 5 calls over the previous month. Overall, the El Cerrito / Kensington Fire Department responded to 321 calls for service during the month.

## **Vehicle into Structures**

Fortunately, there were no fires in the last two months, however, within a few days of each other, Engine 165 did respond to two vehicle accidents where the cars had hit a structure. On August 11<sup>th</sup>, a vehicle on Cambridge failed to stop at an intersection and crashed into the garage on the opposite side. No one including the driver were hurt. A few days later on August 14<sup>th</sup>, another car hit the office building right behind the ACE Hardware store. The building was not occupied, and the driver was not injured.

## **COVID-19 Mandates**

Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases appearing including the Delta variant, the County issued a new mandate that not only mandated masks indoors but for the Fire Department, mandatory testing of all non-vaccinated personnel. The Fire Department has procured self-administered antigen (Rapid) tests that all non-vaccinated personnel will take at the start of their shift. If a positive test is indicated, the person will be administered a PCR test and sent home to quarantine until the results of this test are complete. We are fortunate to have an arrangement for free PCR testing through Cal Berkeley's School of Public Health. The City of El Cerrito is discussing the potential of Mandatory vaccination but are awaiting to determine the potential conflicts or issues this may cause with the labor group.

## **CERT Training**

The Fire Department is planning on starting up in person CERT training soon. There have been no classes since March of 2020 due to the pandemic. Exact dates are still on hold while the current surge of the Delta variant is still high. Also, with the retirement of Chief Grupalo, we are short staff to coordinate this until his replacement is hired (See below). We are looking into FEMA's new curriculum which also includes a hybrid virtual training. More to follow on this topic.

### **Battalion Chief Recruitment**

The Fire Department has hired the business management consultant firm Peckham & McKenney to handle the recruitment for a Battalion Chief / Fire Marshal to replace Chief Gibson who retired in December of 2020. From this list, the city plans to also hire a replacement for Chief Grupalo who retired in July. The filing period is now open and closes on September 27 at which time evaluations and interviews will begin.

### **Out of County Deployment**

Monday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, the OES Engine #413 was redeployed and assigned to the Caldor Fire. They departed at 4:00 pm and are part of a Task Force from within the County that is helping with the stand being made to protect South Lake Tahoe. They arrived Monday night and have been assigned for a 24-hour shift at Echo Summit which is where the attempt to hold the fire out of the basin is being made. This fire has burned over 199,000 acres, has destroyed more than 670 structures and is only 17% contained at this time.

Statewide there have been over 6,900 wildfires this year and there are 17 active large fires currently burning. More than 1,830,000 acres have burned, and more than 2,800 structures have been damaged or destroyed. El Cerrito currently has 7 personnel assigned to the fires. This year the Department has been deployed 16 times to 7 different fires so far and has logged in over 2,800 hours.

### **Vegetation Management**

As reported out last month, the local vegetation fuel moisture levels continue to drop and are at late summer levels even with the recent marine layers returning at night. Due to these conditions, we are continuing with residential inspections of properties in the community to get 100% compliance before the super critical late summer/fall heat and Diablo winds. Based on these ongoing inspections, it appears that residents are for the most part complying with the District policy and are working at cutting their weeds. Vegetation Management Information is available at the Department's website.

### **Ready for Wildfire?**

In a continuing effort for residents to be prepared for wildfires, Cal Fire has an opt-in program that anyone can register their cell phone and ZIP code to receive text updates on any fire in the local area. There are also helpful check lists and other information to help you evaluate your home and property to be better prepared for a wildfire event. The link to this sign in is:

<https://incidents.readyforwildfire.org/>

### **Register with the Contra Costa County Community Warning System**

It cannot be stressed enough the importance to take a moment to register cell phones with the Contra Costa County Community Warning System (CWS). CWS will alert you when life-threatening incidents, like wildfire or power shutdowns, occur. [www.cwsalerts.com](http://www.cwsalerts.com)