



EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

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DATE: August 3, 2022

TO: Bill Hansell: General Manager

FROM: Jose Castrejon: Interim Fire Chief

RE: **Fire Chief's Report for the July 2022 Fire District Board Meeting**

July Incident Run Reports

There were 28 incidents that occurred during the month of July in the community of Kensington. This is a decrease of six incidents from the previous month. Engine 165 responded to 70 incidents in July in all communities. This is one less response from the prior month. Overall, the El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Department has responded to 2,297 calls for service so far this year. The primary area of calls for service continues to be medical emergencies and assists.

Vegetation Inspections

The Fire Department has completed the third round of residential inspections for compliance with the District's Vegetation Management Policy. The community has made significant progress in reducing hazardous vegetation. All of Kensington's parcels were inspected, and less than five have required forced abatement. Residents with properties that were found to be out of compliance have been notified and will move on to the public hearing phase. State Law requires compliance in "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones" at all times. This includes annual grasses, and weeds are required to be continually cut and maintained to a height of 4" to 6". While this entails more frequent maintenance, the benefit is a reduced fire risk while mowing. Mowing grasses before noon also lowers the fire risk of unintentionally starting a fire. For more information on the District's website as well as Cal Fire's website on safe practices around the home to create a safe environment.

Monkeypox

Contra Costa County Health Services provided the following information about Monkey Pox. Monkeypox is a rare disease that is caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. It belongs to the same family of viruses as smallpox. On July 23, 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the monkeypox outbreak a global health emergency. In the U.S., the first monkeypox case from the current outbreak was identified on May 18. As of July 29, 5,189 cases in 47 states have been diagnosed, including nearly 800 in California. Initially imported from endemic countries via international travel, the primary mode of transmission is now local community spread. Thankfully, monkeypox is not easily transmitted; most diagnosed patients describe close, sustained physical contact with others who have had it prior to contracting it themselves. There have been no reported cases in Kensington at this point in time.

COVID-19 Mandates

COVID infections remained steady for the month of June. There have been no new deaths reported in Kensington from the virus at this time. Seventeen new cases were reported in the last 14 days bringing the positive test count to 462 in the community. The County and the Fire Department have relaxed some of their protocols, though the Department continues to test all non-vaccinated personnel at the start of their shift and requires masks to be worn on all responses.

Fire Season

The Fourth of July holiday had fire departments on alert. Fire agencies in Contra Costa County implemented a reduced response plan for the holiday weekend. In addition, law enforcement agencies assigned resources to crack down on illegal fireworks. Thanks to all this work, the call volume related to fireworks this year was much less than in the previous two years. There were no fireworks-related incidents within Kensington or El Cerrito during this time.

New Fire Chief

The El Cerrito City Council has hired Eric Saylor as Fire Chief for the City and community of Kensington. Chief Saylor began his career in the fire service in the City of Galt in Northern California. He was hired by the City of Sacramento in 1998, where he worked his way up through the ranks to Assistant Chief. Chief Saylor is currently working on a Doctorate in Leadership and Organizational Change from the University of Southern California. He holds a master's degree in Security Studies from the Naval Post Graduate School and a bachelor's degree in Business Management from California State University, Sacramento.

Fire Personnel

In mid-July, the fire department welcomed our newest member, Firefighter Jorge Arechiga. Jorge brings five years of experience from Cal Fire in Napa County. He was assigned to Station 26 in Saint Helena and was also a member of the Boggs Mountain Helitack.

Engineer Paramedic Gary Johnson retired after 20 years of service to the communities of Kensington and El Cerrito. Gary finished his career working out of Station 71 in El Cerrito.

The fire department is actively recruiting to fill the firefighter paramedic vacancy created by the recent retirement of Engineer Gary Johnson. We hope to have the position filled by early to late fall.

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