


# POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Mike Gancasz, Chief of Police



## MEMORANDUM

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

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### **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:



- 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

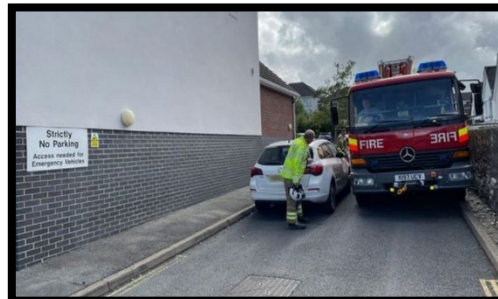
- Residents should move vehicles to:
  - driveways
  - garages
  - wider streets not designated as restricted

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

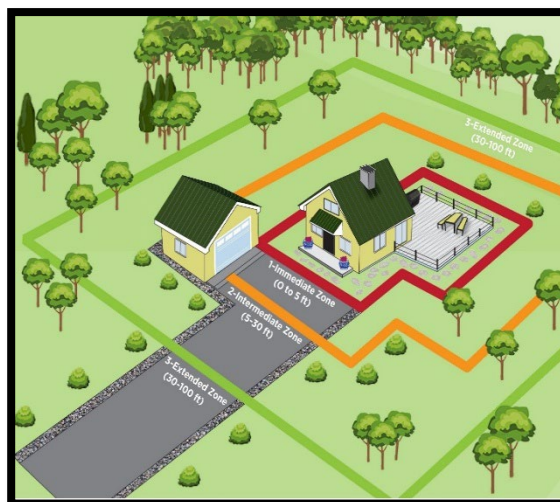
#### D. Why Parking Restrictions Matter



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

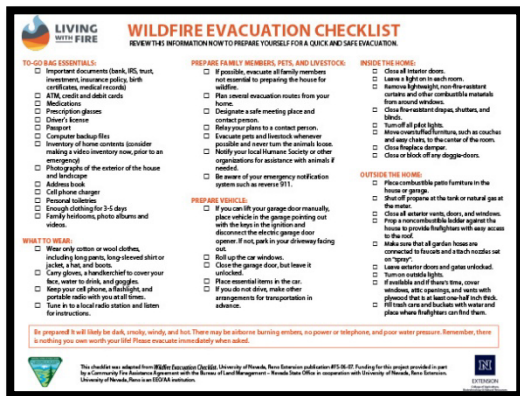
Located at:

- 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:

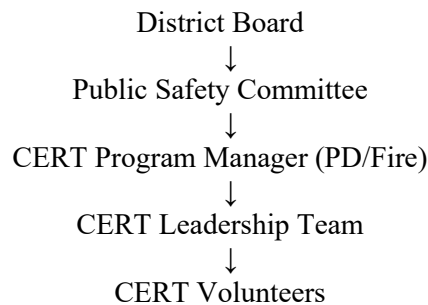
- Splits authority
- Disconnects CERT from fire/police command
- Higher liability exposure

**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.