



# EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

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**DATE:** May 2022

**TO:** Bill Hansell, General Manager

**FROM:** Jose Castrejon, Interim Fire Chief

**RE:** **Fire Chief's Report for the May 2022 Board of Directors Meeting**

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## **April Incident Run Reports**

There were 24 incidents that occurred during the month of April in the community of Kensington. This is a decrease of 5 incidents from the previous month. Engine 165 responded to a total of 57 incidents in all communities in April which is an increase of one incident over the previous month. Overall, the El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Department has responded to 934 calls for service so far this year.

There was a slight decrease in incidents last month. Engine 165's responses trended lower within the community. The main area of decrease was in fire responses and medical emergencies.

## **Fire Chief Recruitment**

The executive recruitment company Peckham and McKenney has been retained by the City of El Cerrito to recruit a new Fire Chief. A total of eight finalists were interviewed by two separate panels consisting of the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, department heads, a labor representative as well as a Fire District representative. Three candidates were recommended for a second interview. The City Manager is currently holding interviews for the final three candidates. The City Manager has appointed me as Interim Chief until a permanent Fire Chief is hired and brought on board.

## **Vegetation Inspections**

Recent rains in the area have temporarily decreased fire danger in the area but encouraged vegetation growth. The rains have had a minimal impact on the current drought as it extends into a third consecutive year. The Fire Department has completed the initial round of residential inspections for compliance with the District's Vegetation Management Policy. Fifty-three residents were sent non-compliance letters on April 25<sup>th</sup>, asking them to clear their properties by May 25, 2022. Residents maintaining their property is not a seasonal task as State Law requires compliance in "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones" at all times. Annual grasses and weeds are required to always be cut and maintained to a height of 4" to 6". While it entails more frequent maintenance, it is much safer to cut or mow short dry grass than waiting until it is 12' high or taller and dry. There is more information on both the District's and Cal Fire's websites on fire safe practices around the home to create a safer environment.

## **COVID-19 Mandates**

The County continues to see a decline in COVID infections and hospitalizations since the peak in January. There were no new deaths reported in Kensington from the virus at this time. Thirteen new cases were reported in the last fourteen days bringing the positive test count to 310 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.

## **Evacuation Drill**

KFPD, with the support and collaboration of the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office Community Warning System (CWS) and Zonehaven, held a practice evacuation drill on Saturday, April 9th. The area between Arlington Blvd. Kensington Park and the Berkeley city border to the ridgeline fall within evacuation zones XCC-ECK- 007/8. Zone 7 practiced a "virtual drill" while many residents in Zone 8 took part in the practice evacuation to El Cerrito Plaza. Sunset View Cemetery also assisted by opening their gates as an evacuation route. Kensington had a robust turnout from the residents and many volunteers assisted. This was a great opportunity to provide practice to both the public and our first responders to simulate a community evacuation.

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

It would not have been possible to hold the evacuation drill if residents were not registered with the Contra Costa County Community Warning Systems (CWS). It cannot be stressed enough the importance for all residents to take a moment to register cell phones and landlines with the CWS. CWS will alert you when life-threatening incidents, like wildfire or power shutdowns, occur. [www.cwsalerts.com](http://www.cwsalerts.com)