



Kensington Emergency Preparedness Report September 2026

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This month focused on expanding neighborhood-level preparedness capacity, advancing CERT organizational development, and initiating Firewise renewal reporting. Work this month continues to build the communications networks, resident engagement, and practical mitigation actions needed for a more coordinated and resilient Kensington.

CERT Program Activity

Go-Bag Bingo: October 6 | 6:30pm Kensington Community Center

El Cerrito-Kensington CERT will host an engaging preparedness and social activity event called, Go-Bag Bingo: What's Really in Your Bag?

The event pairs emergency preparedness education with a social, family-friendly format designed to make preparedness information more approachable and memorable. Residents are encouraged to bring their emergency go-bags, if they have them, for an informal show-and-tell and to participate in Go-Bag Bingo. Those who do not yet have a go-bag are equally encouraged to attend.

CERT Nonprofit Organization Development

Development of the El Cerrito-Kensington CERT nonprofit organization continues to move forward. The steering committee is finalizing the organizational filings and related foundational work needed to establish the entity and support its future operations.

A CERT website has also been created in anticipation of a public launch. The website will provide a central location for program information, training announcements, volunteer opportunities, preparedness resources, and future CERT-related activities.



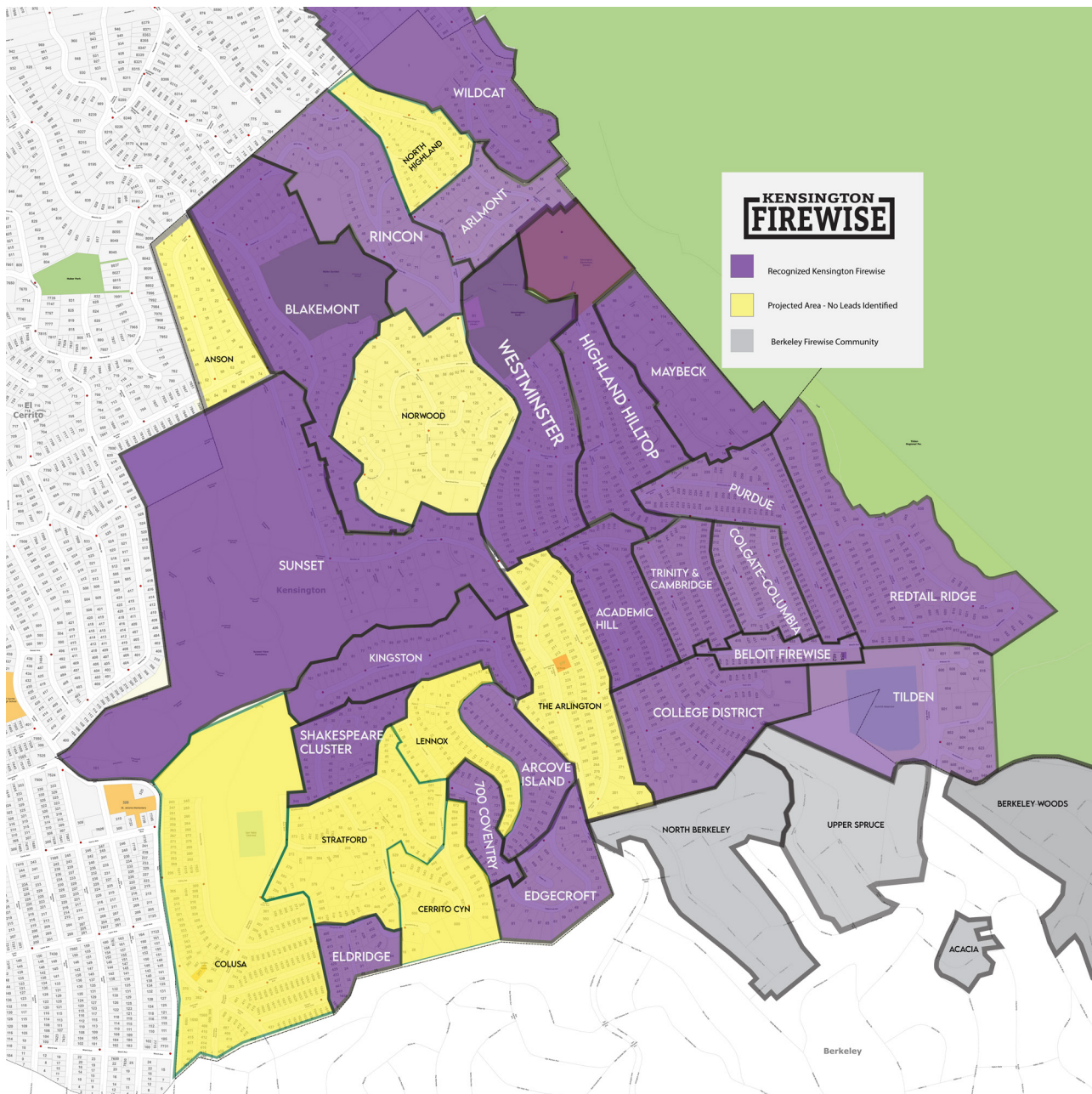
Firewise Neighborhood Development

Outreach and informational messaging have been provided to two Firewise areas exploring development. The messaging is designed to clarify the purpose of Firewise participation, explain the role of neighborhood leads, and frame Firewise as a voluntary, community-centered preparedness program rather than a regulatory requirement.

The goal is to help residents understand that Firewise supports both individual household action and neighborhood-scale resilience. It also creates an effective structure for sharing KCSD preparedness information, Fire Department guidance, program announcements, and opportunities such as hazardous-vegetation assistance and Measure X Community Chipping Days.

Role of a Firewise Lead

In Kensington, Firewise Leads serve as neighborhood partners to the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Their primary role is to help engage neighbors and improve the delivery of preparedness information, program announcements, and resources within their designated Firewise area.



The principal objectives in Kensington Firewise are to:

Strengthen neighbor-to-neighbor relationships.

Firewise Leads can help bring residents together through a block meeting, block party, coffee gathering, or other informal neighborhood event that encourages neighbors to meet face-to-face. Existing community events, including National Night Out activities, can provide a useful opportunity to invite the broader Firewise neighborhood, build connections, and begin a practical conversation about wild-fire and emergency preparedness.

Develop a neighborhood communication network.

Creating and maintaining a neighborhood email distribution list can help residents stay connected and receive timely, localized information. This provides a more direct means of sharing KCSO announcements, preparedness resources, Fire Department guidance, and opportunities such as the Hazardous Vegetation Grant and the Kensington Ember Exclusion Program (KEEP).

Neighborhood-level communication can also support more efficient outreach when information is specific to an area. For example, this may be particularly useful when Measure X Community Chipping Days are scheduled for particular streets, dates, or collection locations.

Expectations for Property Owners

Firewise should not be viewed as a program that imposes broad requirements on property owners. Instead, it is an opportunity for residents to become more engaged with their neighbors and participate in a coordinated approach to wildfire preparedness.

Property owners are encouraged to:

- Build stronger relationships and communication networks with nearby neighbors.
- Follow the guidance and recommendations of the Fire Department and Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.
- Take practical steps toward household preparedness, home hardening, defensible space, and evacuation readiness.
- Coordinate with neighbors to improve neighborhood-wide wildfire resilience.
- Participate in community programs, educational events, chipping opportunities, and preparedness reporting.

While the District cannot necessarily require residents to adopt every preparedness recommendation, participation in these practices is in the best interest of individual households and the larger community. The development of Firewise areas also helps establish the neighborhood communication infrastructure needed to support the continuing evolution of CERT, earthquake preparedness, evacuation planning, and other emergency preparedness initiatives.

There are circumstances in which enforceable requirements may apply, particularly when the Fire Department takes action related to hazardous vegetation removal. Firewise itself, however, is primarily a voluntary education, outreach, communication, and community-building program. It is one of the principal tools used by the KCSO Emergency Preparedness Coordinator to improve program delivery, connect residents to available resources, and strengthen neighbor-to-neighbor preparedness.

Community Chipping Days

Community Chipping Days were completed for the Maybeck Firewise and Edgemoor Firewise areas. These events gave residents an opportunity to reduce vegetation, dispose of chipped material appropriately, and take visible, collective action toward wildfire risk reduction.

The events also provided valuable engagement opportunities. Community chipping programs create a setting in which residents can meet neighbors, learn about Firewise participation, and see how individual property actions contribute to neighborhood-scale resilience.

These activities are initiated by Firewise leads and coordinated by residents and serviced by Contra Costa County Fire. **Thank you to the residents for their hard work!**



Firewise Renewal Reporting

Firewise renewal activities are beginning, including testing and refinement of a data-collection process that can be incorporated into Firewise renewal applications. The purpose is to better capture and communicate the time, financial investment, and direct wildfire-preparedness work residents are completing throughout the year.

Early reporting from the Arcove Island Firewise area demonstrates the significant level of resident investment already occurring. Based on activity submitted by 13 households:

Reported activity	Progress to date
Investment in contractor work, home-hardening improvements, landscaping, and do-it-yourself defensible-space projects	\$203,650
Hours devoted to yard cleanup, vegetation removal, home hardening, landscaping, and community wildfire-preparedness activities	1,533 hours
Participating households reporting activity to date	13 households

These numbers are already substantial, particularly because they reflect only the households that have reported activity so far. As Firewise renewal data collection is expanded and improved, the District will be able to more clearly document the collective value of resident mitigation work, volunteer labor, home-hardening investment, vegetation management, and neighborhood preparedness activity.

This reporting will also help identify patterns in neighborhood participation, improve future outreach, and provide a stronger basis for communicating Kensington's preparedness progress to residents, partner agencies, grant programs, and the Kensington Community Services District Board.

Public Education: Watch Duty Presentation

A public Zoom presentation with Watch Duty is scheduled for September 14 at 6:30 p.m.

The presentation will cover:

- A brief history of Watch Duty.
- How the organization operates.
- How residents can get the most out of the Watch Duty app.
- Features currently in development to improve the delivery of emergency information to communities.

The presenter will be Sara Paul, a founding team member and Community Manager for Watch Duty. In this role, she works closely with Watch Duty's more than 400 volunteers and its staff team. Paul began reporting on wildfires in Sonoma County in 2017, joined Watch Duty as a volunteer in summer 2021, and has supported operations, reporting, recruitment, and volunteer training for the past five years.

Her background also includes wildfire-mitigation work, GMRS radio use, FEMA certifications, and service on the boards of her local Fire Protection District and Safer West County in Sonoma County.

The presentation will give Kensington residents an opportunity to better understand how Watch Duty gathers and distributes emergency information, how to use the platform during wildfire and other emergency incidents, and how the app fits within a broader household preparedness and situation-al-awareness strategy.