



Kensington Emergency Preparedness Report

July 2026

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Kensington's emergency preparedness initiatives continue to build momentum across multiple program areas. This month's report highlights significant progress in the Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement (HVRR) program, the Kensington Ember Exclusion Program (KEEP), Firewise community engagement, and CERT organizational development. Two notable cross-program developments are also addressed: a resubmission addendum for previously rejected HVRR applications with evacuation route and parking benefits, and a preliminary discussion item regarding a proposed Eucalyptus Initiative, which falls outside the scope of the existing HVRR program.

Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement (HVRR)

Approved Applications — Reimbursements in Process

Reimbursements are now being processed for all HVRR applications approved at the June 2026 KCSB Board meeting. Applicants who received approval have been notified to proceed with vegetation removal work, and reimbursement documentation is being collected per established program procedures.

Resubmitted Applications — Addendum to KCSB Board and Measure X

Several applications that were not approved in the June 2026 review cycle are being resubmitted for reconsideration. These projects have been identified as offering co-benefits to the community beyond individual property mitigation — specifically, improvements to evacuation routes and expanded off-street parking capacity. The resubmissions are being forwarded as an addendum to the KCSB Board and concurrently submitted to the Contra Costa County Measure X Wildfire Mitigation Program.

It is important to note that if Contra Costa County's Measure X program approves any of these projects, the associated scope of work will be completed by the County regardless of whether the KCSB Board approves the addendum. This represents an opportunity for Kensington to advance community-benefit projects through a parallel funding pathway that does not depend solely on district resources.

Eucalyptus Initiative — Informational / Preliminary Discussion Item

A proposal for a Eucalyptus Initiative is being brought before the KCSD Board as a separate, stand-alone item. This initiative is clearly outside the scope and capabilities of the existing HVRR program, which is structured as a resident reimbursement grant focused on individual property mitigation. The scale, coordination requirements, and nature of eucalyptus removal as a community-wide hazard reduction effort necessitate a distinct programmatic and funding framework.

This is a preliminary, informational discussion item. No formal proposal or scope document is being presented at this time; the purpose is to introduce the concept to the Board and solicit initial direction on whether and how to pursue this work.

Kensington Ember Exclusion Program (KEEP)

Site visits for KEEP applicants are ongoing as the program moves from application validation into material distribution and installation. Approximately one-third of submitted applications have now been validated. Wildfire Defense Mesh is ready to begin production for the first set of validated applicants, and the program has successfully completed a prototype installation test on three homes.

The strong early response, more than 90 applications received since the April 1 launch, reflects growing resident awareness of ember cast risk and the vulnerability of attic vents, eave openings, and crawlspace vents to ember intrusion.

Firewise

Annual Renewal and Engagement Data Collection

Kensington's Firewise leads are working to capture neighborhood-level engagement data from their communities in preparation for the October 2026 annual renewal deadline for Firewise USA recognition. This data collection effort will become an annual practice to

maintain recognition status and demonstrate measurable community participation in fire risk reduction activities.

Firewise communities were also encouraged to register National Night Out block parties through the Kensington Police Department, an opportunity to increase community visibility and strengthen neighborhood preparedness networks.

Grant Opportunity with Berkeley

Firewise Kensington is actively pursuing a joint grant application with a Firesafe Council in Berkeley to support hazardous vegetation management. This opportunity emerged quickly, and Kensington moved swiftly to capitalize on it. Berkeley has expressed strong support for the collaboration, and the project represents a significant development: one year ago, Kensington lacked the organizational capacity or program infrastructure to pursue external grants of this kind. The ability to now compete for grant funding reflects the meaningful growth in institutional capability achieved over the past year.

Kensington now has 22 recognized Firewise communities, a network that continues to strengthen coordination among neighbors, KCSO, the El Cerrito Kensington Fire Department, and neighboring organizations including the Berkeley Fire Safe Councils and El Cerrito Fire Safe Council.

CERT

El Cerrito/Kensington CERT continues its organizational development and is actively building community capacity. CERT participated in the 4th of July El Cerrito WorldOne community festival, engaging residents and raising visibility for the program's volunteer recruitment efforts.

On June 29, CERT hosted a refresher training session at the Kensington Community Center. The session focused on radio communication protocols and ham radio operations. This training aligns with the team's ongoing focus on building sustainable, community-led emergency response capacity.

CERT's steering committee continues to meet regularly to advance organizational development and coordinate volunteer engagement across El Cerrito and Kensington.