



**NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

MCKEAN COUNTY

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 1, 2010 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

RELEASED MARCH 2014

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

EUGENE A. DePASQUALE - AUDITOR GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Lane Corbett, President
NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
McKean County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and mandated by the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010 (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, for the period January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2012.

We conducted this compliance audit in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* applicable to performance audits, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the volunteer firefighters' relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report; and
2. To determine if the volunteer firefighters' relief association received state aid and expended state aid and accumulated relief funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objectives identified above.

Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures including the safeguarding of assets. In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the volunteer firefighters' relief association's internal controls as they relate to the association's compliance with those requirements and that we considered to be significant within the context of the audit objectives, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented. Our audit procedures also included tests of documentary evidence supporting the Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2012, with the custodians of the funds, debtors, creditors, and financial institutions to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. Additionally, we performed procedures to provide a reasonable assurance of detecting instances of violations of legal and regulatory requirements or violations of provisions of contracts that are significant within the context of the audit objectives.

The results of our audit, for the period January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2012, found the Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report and, in all significant respects, received state aid and expended state aid and accumulated relief funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures, except as noted in the findings listed below and discussed later in this report. The results of our tests also indicated the Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2012, had a cash balance of \$26,160 and no investments.

Finding No. 1 – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Signatory Authority for the Distribution of Funds

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report.

August 9, 2013



EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010, (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, the Department of the Auditor General's duty is to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters' relief association to determine that funds received under the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution Law, Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (commonly referred to as Act 205), are properly expended.

The Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association, herein referred to as Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association, is a charitable organization that was formed primarily to afford financial protection to volunteer firefighters and to encourage individuals to participate in volunteer fire service.

Act 118 governs the overall operation of the volunteer firefighters' relief association. The relief association's bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which the volunteer firefighters' relief association conducts business. To fulfill its primary purpose, Act 118 authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by Act 118, it is the responsibility of the volunteer firefighters' relief association to choose investments in a proper and prudent manner.

Volunteer firefighters' relief associations receive public tax monies, and the association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the association's financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all association transactions. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the association operates in accordance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures.

Act 205 sets forth the computation of the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution paid to each applicable municipality throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The amount of the distribution is based upon the population of each municipality and the market value of real estate within the municipality. Upon receipt of this distribution, the municipality must allocate the funds to the volunteer firefighters' relief association of the fire service organization or fire service organizations, which is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality. The Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Norwich Township	McKean	\$4,008	\$5,711	\$3,242

BACKGROUND (Continued)

The volunteer firefighters' relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

Northwich Township Volunteer Fire Department

NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has complied with the following prior audit finding and recommendation:

- Insufficient Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

By increasing the officer's Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage to an amount greater than the balance of the relief association's cash assets.

NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

Condition: The relief association did not maintain minutes of meetings as required by Act 118 and the relief association's bylaws. Specifically, the only minutes of meetings available were from January, 2010; January, 2011; and January, 2012, even though the bylaws require monthly meetings to be held.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(a) states, in part, that the relief association:

. . . must provide for taking and preserving minutes of all meetings and maintenance of such books of account as may be necessary and appropriate to afford a permanent record of its fiscal affairs.

In addition, Section I of Article II of the relief association's bylaws states:

Regular meetings of this association shall be held on the first Wednesday of each month immediately following the regular meeting of the Norwich Township Hose Company. Six members shall constitute a quorum.

Cause: Relief association officials were unaware that maintaining minutes of meetings was required by Act 118 and only the bylaws guidelines established by the relief association.

Effect: Without detailed minutes of meetings, evidence that relief association business was presented before the membership for approval does not exist.

Recommendation: We recommend relief association officials maintain a permanent record of all relief association meetings as required by Act 118. The minutes should include an adequate record of all financial-related business conducted by the relief association. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Signatory Authority for the Disbursement of Funds

Condition: During the current audit engagement, we identified six checks out of eight drawn on the relief association's checking account that only contained the signature of one officer, even though two signatures are required, pursuant to Act 118 and the relief association bylaws. Issuing checks with the signature of only one officer negates the relief association's internal control over the disbursement process.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(3) states, in part:

The bylaws shall require that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer, shall be required to bind the association by formal contract or to issue a negotiable instrument.

In addition, Article VII, Section 1, of the relief association's bylaws states:

The signature of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the treasurer, shall be required for the issuance of relief association checks, withdrawal from the association savings account, redemption of any relief association investment, or any other negotiable instrument issued by the association.

Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that the relief association have sufficient internal control procedures in place to ensure the signatures of at least two relief association officials are included on all negotiable instruments. Adequate internal control procedures require that checks be signed only after the propriety of the expenditures has been determined and the payee, date, and amount to be paid has been confirmed. Additionally, responsible relief association officers should compare this information with supporting documentation, such as invoices, contract, etc., prior to approving the checks.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures which require the signatures of at least two officers on all negotiable instruments.

Effect: As a result of the relief association officer issuing checks with only one signature, assets were placed at greater risk as expenditures were being made without a second relief association officer having the opportunity to verify the propriety of the expenditures. The application of the second signature, after evaluating the propriety of the expenditure, reduces the risk for errors occurring and going undetected, and reduces the risk of misappropriation.

NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association officials establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the treasurer, are included on all relief association negotiable instruments as defined by Act 118. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2010 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7412 states: a volunteer firefighters' relief association is an organization formed primarily for the purpose of affording financial protection to volunteer firefighters against the consequences of misfortune suffered as a result of their participation in the fire service. The organization may contain within its membership the members of one or more fire companies and may serve secondary purposes, as set forth in this subchapter, but only if adequate provisions have been first made to serve the primary purpose.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416 authorizes the investment of relief association funds and outlines the types of benefits and services that can be provided with volunteer firefighters' relief association funds.

Furthermore, all expenditures must be properly authorized as prescribed in the volunteer firefighters' relief association bylaws and approved at an association meeting.

USES OF FUNDS:

Benefit Services:

Insurance premiums	\$ 13,749
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 13,749</u>

NORWICH TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Norwich Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Lane Corbett, President

Mr. Blain Puller, Vice President

Ms. Sara Lathrop, Secretary

Ms. Gisele M. Lemon, Treasurer

A report was also distributed to the following municipality, which allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association.

Ms. Patricia C. Fay, Secretary
Norwich Township

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 231 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@auditorgen.state.pa.us.