

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## The Aliquippa Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

Beaver County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013

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March 2015



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Kevin Hawk, President  
ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Beaver County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Aliquippa 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, 2011 to December 31, 2013.

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 findings 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 Aliquippa 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 Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2013, 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, 2011 to December 31, 2013, found the Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings 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.

Finding No. 1 – Undocumented Expenditure

Finding No. 2 – Insufficient Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

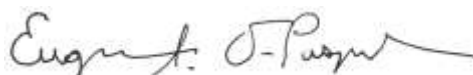
Finding No. 3 – Inadequate Financial Record- Keeping System

The results of our tests also indicated the Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2013, had a cash balance of \$408,305 and no investments.

Furthermore, a scope limitation on our audit exists, as detailed in the Observation section of this report.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their response has been included in the report.

February 26, 2015



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 Aliquippa Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association, herein referred to as the Aliquippa 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.

## **BACKGROUND – (Continued)**

The Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was not allocated state aid. In December 2008, the City Of Aliquippa dissolved the charter for the city's volunteer firefighter's and has not allocated state aid to the Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association since then.

The volunteer firefighters' relief association is no longer affiliated with a volunteer fire service organization.

ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has complied with the prior audit findings and recommendations, as follows:

- Failure to Secure Possession of Relief Owned Equipment

By securing possession of all relief association owned equipment; and

- Inadequate Minutes of Meetings

By maintaining detailed minutes of all relief association meetings held during the period.

ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Undocumented Expenditure**

Condition: The relief association was unable to provide adequate supporting documentation for an expenditure amounting to \$455 made to an individual member on June 30, 2011.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418(a) states:

The Office of Auditor General shall have the power and its duty shall be to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters' relief association receiving money under Chapter 7 of the Act of December 18, 1984 (P.L. 1005, No. 205), [FN1] known as the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act, as far as may be necessary to satisfy the Auditor General that the money received was or is being expended for no purpose other than that authorized by this subchapter. Copies of all audits shall be furnished to the Governor.

Without adequate supporting documentation, such as an invoice, this department is unable to determine whether relief association funds were expended for purposes authorized by Act 118. Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that supporting documentation be maintained to evidence the propriety of all financial transactions.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure supporting documentation is maintained for all expenditures.

Effect: Lack of supporting documentation, such as an invoice, made it impossible to determine if the expenditure was made in accordance with Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416(f). In addition, the failure to maintain adequate supporting documentation for relief association expenditures can lead to an increased risk of errors occurring and funds being misappropriated.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association provide this department with adequate supporting documentation, such as an invoice, to ensure the propriety of the expenditure or that the relief association be reimbursed \$455 for the undocumented expenditure. We also recommend that the relief association officials maintain supporting documentation for all future expenditures. 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.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.



ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 2 – Insufficient Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage**

**Condition:** The relief association did not maintain a Surety (Fidelity) bond in a sufficient amount to cover the relief association's authorized disbursing officer. The relief association's Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage amount was \$100,000; however, as of December 31, 2013, the relief association's cash assets totaled \$408,305.

**Criteria:** Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(4) states, in part, that:

. . . the disbursing officer, whether designated treasurer, comptroller, financial secretary or otherwise, shall be bonded by corporate surety for faithful performance of duty. The amount of the bond shall be at least as great as the maximum cash balance in current funds of the association at any time during the fiscal year, and the premium on the bond shall be a proper charge against the funds of the association.

**Cause:** Relief association officials failed to monitor the relief association's cash balance to ensure that the Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer was in compliance with Act 118 provisions.

**Effect:** As a result of the authorized disbursing officer of the relief association being insufficiently bonded, the relief association's cash assets were not adequately safeguarded.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that the relief association officials ensure that its Surety (Fidelity) bond sufficiently covers the relief association's authorized disbursing officer, as required by Act 118. This requirement may be accomplished by increasing the Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer to an amount greater than the expected maximum balance of the relief association's cash assets, or by decreasing the relief association's cash assets to an amount anticipated to remain below the policy coverage amount. In addition, relief association officials should monitor the relief association's cash balance to ensure that unexpected events affecting the relief association's current funds do not again result in insufficient Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer. 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.

**Auditor's Conclusion:** Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 3 – Inadequate Financial Record Keeping System**

Condition: The relief association's financial record-keeping system did not provide effective control over cash receipts, disbursements, and monetary assets. The following are the noted deficiencies:

- A journal was not accurately maintained to record the receipts and disbursements of the relief association.
- Numerous bank statements for the current audit period were missing and had to be ordered from the bank.
- Documentation to support one of the expenditures tested, as disclosed in Finding No. 1, was not available for examination at the time of the audit.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(a) states:

A volunteer firefighters' relief association may be a body corporate, governed by a charter and bylaws or an unincorporated association of individuals governed by bylaws and a constitution. In either case, it 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, an adequate system of accounting and record-keeping is a prerequisite for sound administration of relief association assets.

Cause: Relief association officials were unaware of their various record-keeping responsibilities.

Effect: The failure of relief association officials to maintain adequate records prohibits the membership from effectively monitoring the relief association's financial operations.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association establish and maintain a financial record-keeping system that provide effective control over cash receipts, disbursements, and monetary assets. 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.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

## ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION OBSERVATION

### **Observation – Scope Limitation**

The Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association (VFRA) cash balances reported as totaling \$408,305 as of December 31, 2013 could not be confirmed. Requests for an independent confirmation of the cash balances were made on November 13, 2014 and December 2, 2014 to the bank which held the VFRA cash accounts. While the VFRA provided December 31, 2013 bank statements, the bank failed to provide an independent confirmation of the cash balances.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418(a) provides that the Department of Auditor General shall have the power and its duty shall be to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters' relief association . . . as far as may be necessary to satisfy the Auditor General that the money received was or is being expended for no purpose other than that authorized by this subchapter. Copies of all audits shall be furnished to the Governor.

Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) Section No. 6.56 states, "Auditors must obtain sufficient appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for their findings and conclusions." GAGAS Section No. 6.61(f) states, "Evidence obtained from a knowledgeable, credible, and unbiased third party is generally more reliable than evidence from management of the audited entity or others who have a direct interest in the audited entity."

Statement of Auditing Standards (SAS) No. 106 requires auditors to request independent confirmations of investment balances directly from the financial institution from which the VFRA purchased the investment.

Even though we made several requests, a confirmation of the VFRA's cash balances were not provided by the bank. Our inability to confirm the VFRA's total cash balance constitutes a scope limitation on our audit, as this scope limitation prevented us from confirming the VFRA's reported cash balance of \$408,305 as of December 31, 2013.

ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

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	\$ 3,051
Death benefits	5,000
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	54
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 8,105</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment maintenance	\$ 1,010
Training expenses	70
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 1,080</u>
Administrative Services:	
Officer compensation	\$ 5,425
Other administrative expenses	6,129
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 11,554</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Undocumented expenditure	<u>\$ 455</u>

ALIQUIPPA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Aliquippa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Kevin Hawk	President
Mr. Joseph Olack	Vice President
Mr. Noel Craig	Secretary
Mr. Thomas Danylo	Treasurer

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

Ms. Kelly Callen Aliquippa City	Secretary
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This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov). 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@auditor.gen.state.pa.us](mailto:news@auditor.gen.state.pa.us).