

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Plunketts Creek Township Volunteer Firefighters Relief Association Lycoming County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2014

September 2015



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Jesse Lewis, President
PLUNKETTS CREEK VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Lycoming County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Plunketts Creek 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, 2014.

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.
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 Plunketts Creek 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. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for complying with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we concluded that, for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2014:

- The Plunketts Creek Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report.
- The Plunketts Creek Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association, 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 finding listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding – Untimely Deposit Of State Aid

- The Plunketts Creek Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2014, had a cash balance of \$9,283 and no investments.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Plunketts Creek Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their response has been included in the report. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

August 18, 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 Plunketts Creek Township Volunteer Firefighters Relief Association, herein referred to as the Plunketts Creek 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 Plunketts Creek Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Cascade Township	Lycoming	\$2,382	\$1,357	\$1,576*	\$1,495
Gamble Township	Lycoming	\$ 273	\$ 156	\$ 187	\$ 178
Plunketts Creek Township	Lycoming	\$8,774	\$4,995	\$ 5,726	\$5,411

* The 2013 state aid allocation received from Cascade Township was not deposited by the Plunketts Creek Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association until May 21, 2015, as disclosed in the finding in this report.

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

Plunketts Creek Township Volunteer Fire Department

PLUNKETTS CREEK VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Insufficient Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

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

- Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings

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

PLUNKETTS CREEK VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Untimely Deposit Of State Aid

Condition: The volunteer firefighters' relief association did not deposit the 2013 state aid allocation it received from Cascade Township, in the amount of \$1,576, until May 21, 2015. The foreign fire insurance tax allocation was distributed to the municipal treasurer on September 23, 2013 who forwarded this state aid to the volunteer firefighters' relief association on May 5, 2015, which is not within 60 days of receipt, as required by Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205). Upon receipt of the state aid allocation, the relief association should ensure the funds are deposited in a timely manner.

Criteria: Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), states:

The foreign fire insurance premium tax amount applicable to a municipality served solely by volunteer firefighters shall be paid to the municipality, which shall within 60 days of the date of the receipt of the moneys from the State Treasurer pay the amount received to the relief association fund of the fire department or departments, or fire company or companies, now existing or hereafter organized, inside or outside of the municipality, which is or are actively engaged in the service of the municipality and duly recognized by the governing body of the municipality.

Furthermore, prudent business practices dictate that upon receipt of its state aid allocation, the relief association should establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the funds are deposited in a timely manner.

Cause: The current municipal secretary indicated that there was a change in the individual who held this position during the year 2013 when the state aid would have been issued. The municipal secretary was unaware that the funds had not been issued until the township was contacted by relief association management. Also, relief association officials failed to establish internal control procedures which require that all income received be recorded and deposited in a timely manner.

Effect: As a result of the untimely deposit, funds were not available to pay general operating expenses or for investment purposes. In addition, an untimely deposit of receipts increases the risk that funds could be lost or misappropriated.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials adopt internal control procedures to ensure the timely deposit of all income received. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

PLUNKETTS CREEK VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2014

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	\$ 5,938
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	78
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 6,016</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 31,137
Equipment maintenance	378
Training expenses	1,590
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 33,105</u>
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	<u>\$ 225</u>

PLUNKETTS CREEK VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Plunketts Creek Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Jesse Lewis	President
Mr. Kurt Lentz	Vice President
Ms. Jessica Lentz	Secretary
Mr. Jason Emick	Treasurer

The following municipalities allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association and received a copy of this report:

Ms. Jeanne M. McCaslin Cascade Township	Secretary
Ms. Pat Hipple Gamble Township	Secretary
Ms. Patricia Johnson Plunketts Creek Township	Secretary

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.