

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Bunola Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association Allegheny County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2014

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February 2016



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0018  
Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General  
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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Ms. Brianna Rothey, President  
Bunola Volunteer Firefighters'  
Relief Association  
Allegheny County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Bunola 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, 2012 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 finding 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 Bunola 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, 2012 to December 31, 2014:

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

Finding No. 1 – Untimely Deposit of State Aid

Finding No. 2 – Unauthorized Expenditures

The supplementary financial information contained in this report is presented for purposes of additional disclosure and analysis. We performed only limited procedures on the supplementary financial information and, accordingly, express no form of assurance on it.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Bunola Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their responses have 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.

January 27, 2016



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 Bunola Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association, herein referred to as the Bunola 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 Bunola Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Forward Township	Allegheny	\$5,559	\$6,344	\$3,000*

\* The 2014 state aid allocation received from Forward Township was not deposited by the Bunola Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association until January 2, 2015 as disclosed in Finding No. 1 in this report.

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

Bunola Volunteer Fire Company

BUNOLA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Bunola Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has complied with the prior audit finding and recommendation, 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.

BUNOLA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Untimely Deposit of State Aid**

Condition: The volunteer firefighters' relief association did not deposit the 2014 state aid allocation it received from Forward Township, in the amount of \$3,000, until January 2, 2015. The foreign fire insurance tax allocation was distributed to the municipal treasurer on November 3, 2014, who forwarded this state aid to the volunteer firefighters' relief association on November 3, 2014, which is within 60 days of receipt, as required by Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205). However, upon receipt of the state aid allocation, the relief association did not ensure the funds were 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: 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.

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.

BUNOLA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – (Continued)**

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance for receipt and timely deposit of state aid during the next audit period will be subject to verification through our next audit.

**Finding No. 2 – Unauthorized Expenditures**

Condition: The relief association expended funds for the following items during the current audit period that are not authorized by Act 118:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
08/08/14	1183	Property tax for fire company	\$ 5,315
10/20/14	1185	Property insurance	<u>2,100</u>
Total			<u>\$ 7,415</u>

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416(f)(1,2) states:

The funds of any volunteer firefighters' relief association may be spent:

- (1) To pay for such normal and reasonable running expenses as may be appropriate to the businesslike conduct of the affairs of the association, including legal fees, rental or purchase of offices, payment of reasonable compensation of employees and purchase of office equipment and supplies.
- (2) To purchase contracts of insurance which, at a minimum, shall afford financial assistance to active members of the fire service represented by the association against losses due to injury suffered in the fire service and may also provide, in the order named: (i) for payments to the surviving spouse or other dependents of a member in the event of member's death; (ii) for protection of active firefighters against disease; (iii) for replacement or purchase of prosthetic devices such as visual aids, hearing aids, dentures, braces, crutches and the like, where those devices have been lost or damaged while the owner was engaged in the fire service or where the need for those devices arose because of functional impairment attributable to participation in the fire service; (iv) for repair or replacement, if necessary, of articles of clothing or pocket pagers damaged or lost in the course of participation in the fire service; and (v) for disability incurred after service for a minimum of 20 years as a volunteer firefighter.

BUNOLA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 2 – (Continued)**

Costs associated with property taxes and insurance on a fire company owned building do not qualify as authorized volunteer firefighters' relief association expenditures; consequently, these disbursements are not authorized under Act 118.

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware that the aforementioned expenditures were not authorized by Act 118.

Effect: As a result of these improper expenditures, relief association funds were not available for investment purposes, or to pay for expenditures authorized by Act 118.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$7,415 for the unauthorized expenditure and that relief association officials become familiar with Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416(f) to aid them in determining the propriety of 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 subsequent to the period under review as a result of our audit, on November 23, 2015, the affiliated fire company reimbursed the relief association \$7,415 for the unauthorized expenditures.

Auditor's Conclusion: We reviewed documentation verifying that the reimbursement of \$7,415 was received. Compliance for expenditures made during the next audit period will be subject to verification through our next audit.

BUNOLA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2014

Cash Balance:	\$	7,386
Expenditures:		
Benefit Services:		
Insurance premiums	\$	<u>23,872</u>
Fire Services:		
Equipment purchased	\$	5,261
Equipment maintenance		<u>1,279</u>
Total Fire Services	\$	<u>6,540</u>
Administrative Services:		
Other administrative expenses	\$	5,355
Bond premiums		<u>275</u>
Total Administrative Services	\$	<u>5,630</u>
Other Expenditures:		
Unauthorized expenditure	\$	<u>7,415</u>

BUNOLA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

**The Honorable Tom W. Wolf**  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Bunola Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

<b>Ms. Brianna Rothey</b>	President
<b>Ms. Billie Lazzari</b>	Vice President
<b>Ms. Billie McClelland</b>	Secretary
<b>Ms. Lisa Janisin</b>	Treasurer

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

<b>Ms. Karen Stetor</b> Forward Township	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, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: [news@PaAuditor.gov](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov).