

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association

Dauphin County, Pennsylvania
For the Period
January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2015

August 2016



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Ms. Susan Nornhold, President
Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue
Volunteer Relief Association
Dauphin County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association (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, 2015.

The objective of the audit was to determine if the 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 objective identified above.

Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the 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. 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 objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2015:

- The 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.
- The Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association is not affiliated with a volunteer fire company and was not formed primarily to afford financial protection to volunteer firefighters against the consequences of misfortune suffered as a result of their participation in fire service. As further discussed in the Observation in this report, Act 118 defines a relief association's eligibility to receive state aid. Because the relief association is affiliated with the Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Association, not a fire company, and the relief association states in its bylaws that its primary purpose is to provide volunteer ambulance and rescue personnel of the association with the protection from misfortune suffered as a result of their participation in the ambulance and rescue service, the observation addresses concerns we have with the relief association's eligibility for state aid under these provisions. Therefore, since the Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association does not meet the statutory definition of a volunteer firefighter's relief association, its eligibility to continue to receive and expend state aid under Act 118 may be adversely impacted or discontinued unless the relief association takes the steps necessary to comply with the provisions of Act 118.

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 relief association. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

July 19, 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 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 volunteer firefighters' relief associations. The relief association's bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which the 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 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 that is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality.

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

The 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>	<u>2015</u>
Halifax Township	Dauphin	\$ -	\$ -	\$7,663	\$7,428

The volunteer firefighters' relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The relief association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Association, Inc.

HALIFAX AREA AMBULANCE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OBSERVATION

Observation – Halifax Area Ambulance And Rescue Volunteer Relief Association May Not Comply With The Requirements Of Act 118 Because Its Stated Purpose Is To Provide Volunteer Ambulance And Rescue Personnel Of The Association With The Protection From Misfortune Suffered As A Result Of Their Participation In The Ambulance and Rescue Service. The Association Is Not Affiliated With A Fire Company And Does Not Provide Financial Protection To Volunteer Firefighters Against The Consequences Of Misfortune Suffered As A Result Of Their Participation In The Fire Service.

The Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association states in its bylaws that its purpose is to provide volunteer ambulance and rescue personnel of the association with the protection from misfortune suffered as a result of their participation in the ambulance and rescue service. Act 118 is very clear in setting specific requirements for what constitutes a Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and when such an organization can receive aid funds under that Act. The Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association is not affiliated with a volunteer fire company nor was the association formed primarily to afford financial protection to volunteer firefighters against the consequences of misfortune suffered as a result of their participation in the fire service, as demonstrated in their stated purpose in the association's bylaws. While the Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association is affiliated with the Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Association, the same is an ambulance and rescue service organization and not a fire company as required under Act 118.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7412 states in part, that the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association is:

An organization formed primarily to afford 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.

We are further concerned that the members of the Halifax Area Ambulance And Rescue Volunteer Relief Association, who primarily provide services to the general public, do not meet the definition of "Volunteer Firefighter" as defined in the Act. Because the primary purpose does not comport with the requirements of Act 118, we must question their status as a relief association under the Act.

HALIFAX AREA AMBULANCE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OBSERVATION

Observation – (Continued)

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7412 further states in part, that a Volunteer Firefighter is:

A person who is a member of:

- (1) a fire company organized and existing under the laws of this Commonwealth;
- (2) a fire police unit, rescue squad, ambulance corps or other like organization affiliated with one or more fire companies; [Emphasis added.]
- (3) a fire company or affiliated organization which participates in the fire service but does not look to that service as his or her primary means of livelihood. [Emphasis added.]

The Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association doesn't meet the statutory definition of a volunteer firefighter's relief association and, therefore, its eligibility to continue to receive and expend state aid under Act 118 may be adversely impacted or discontinued in the future. The association should consult with their solicitor and evaluate its state of compliance with the Act 118 requirements stated above and take the steps necessary to meet the requirements. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development can assist the Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association with this determination.

HALIFAX AREA AMBULANCE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER RELIEF ASSOCIATION
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
CASH BALANCE
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2015

Cash	<u>\$ 12,276</u>
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HALIFAX AREA AMBULANCE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER RELIEF ASSOCIATION
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2015

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	<u>\$ 12,318</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment maintenance	<u>\$ 1,560</u>
Administrative Services:	
Bond premiums	<u>\$ 476</u>
Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 14,354</u></u>

HALIFAX AREA AMBULANCE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Halifax Area Ambulance and Rescue Volunteer Relief Association Governing Body:

Ms. Susan Nornhold
President

Ms. Carol Fetterhoff
Vice President

Ms. Amanda Whitebread
Secretary

Mr. Scott Paul
Treasurer

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

Ms. Wendy M. Wentzel
Secretary
Halifax Township

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.