

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## The Thorndale Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Chester County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2017

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April 2018



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General  
Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. John Neff, President  
The Thorndale Volunteer Fireman's  
Relief Association  
Chester County

We have conducted a compliance audit of The Thorndale Volunteer Fireman's 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, 2015 to December 31, 2017.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report.
2. To determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objectives identified above and was not required to be and was not conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

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 objectives. 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, 2015 to December 31, 2017:

- The relief association did not take appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report, as detailed below and discussed in the Status of Prior Finding section of this report.
- The relief association, in all significant respects, complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds, except as noted in the findings listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

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

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 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.

March 27, 2018



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. Relief association bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which relief associations conduct 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 relief associations 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>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Caln Township	Chester	\$ 98,825	\$ 98,042	\$ 90,683

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:

Thorndale Volunteer Fire Company

THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The relief association has not complied with the following prior audit finding. This finding is noted below and discussed in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding. The association management should strive to implement the recommendation and corrective action noted in this audit report.

THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain  
A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster**

Condition: As cited in our prior audit report, the relief association again failed to maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. Although a listing of relief association owned equipment was provided during the current audit period, it was incomplete because it did not contain the names of suppliers (vendors), dates of purchase, cost of equipment and serial numbers to accurately identify equipment owned by the relief association. As such, it was impossible to determine if all equipment purchased during the audit period in the amount of \$103,655 was recorded. In addition, there was an indication that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis; however, the documentation was maintained in list form per vehicle and does not include the necessary criteria to accurately account for the equipment owned by the relief association.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster of all items purchased by the relief association in order to provide an effective accounting control over the relief association's equipment. A cumulative equipment roster of all relief association equipment should include all of the following:

- Types of equipment purchased
- Dates of purchase
- Unit costs
- Names of suppliers
- Serial numbers, if applicable
- Current locations of items
- Final dispositions of sold or damaged equipment
- Evidence of the performance and results of an annual physical inventory

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over equipment by requiring the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster and the performance of an annual physical inventory of equipment.

Effect: The continued failure to properly record equipment purchases in a detailed equipment roster prevents officials from effectively monitoring the relief association's equipment purchases. In addition, the failure to maintain a detailed equipment roster and perform an annual physical inventory of equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association equipment.

THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – (Continued)**

**Recommendation:** We again recommend that the relief association officials maintain a cumulative equipment roster of all equipment owned by the relief association. Furthermore, the relief association should ensure it performs an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment and that the completion of the inventory be sufficiently documented. 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:** We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

**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 \$350,000; however, as of December 31, 2017, the relief association's cash assets totaled \$401,620.

**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.

THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 2 – (Continued)**

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.

THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
CASH AND INVESTMENT BALANCES  
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2017

Cash	\$ 401,620
Fair Value of Investments	<u>33,571</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u>\$ 435,191</u>

THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2015 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:

Insurance premiums	<u>\$ 4,462</u>
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Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 103,655
Equipment maintenance	49,728
Training expenses	34,427
Fire prevention materials	<u>1,544</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 189,354</u>

Administrative Services:

Officer compensation	\$ 1,000
Other administrative expenses	2,961
Bond premiums	<u>2,403</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 6,364</u>

Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 200,180</u></u>
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THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

The Thorndale Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. John Neff**  
President

**Mr. Donald Taylor**  
Vice President

**Ms. Regina Solecki**  
Secretary

**Mr. John P. Carbo**  
Treasurer

**Mr. Patrick Taylor**  
Trustee

**Mr. John Groff**  
Trustee

**Mr. Sean Barron**  
Trustee

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

**Ms. Mary Slade**  
Secretary  
Caln Township

THE THORNDALE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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).