



**FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**HEREIN REFERRED TO AS:**

**FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**ALLEGHENY COUNTY**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**FOR THE PERIOD**

**JANUARY 1, 2006 TO DECEMBER 31, 2008**



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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, Act of June 11, 1968, (P.L. 149, No. 84), as amended, 53 P.S. § 8501 et seq. (commonly referred to as Act 84), 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 Forest Grove 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 84 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 84 authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by Act 84, 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. The Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Robinson Township	Allegheny	\$41,344	\$40,322	\$41,313

BACKGROUND (Continued)

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

Forest Grove Volunteer Fire Department

Mr. Edward Ritter, President  
FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Allegheny County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Forest Grove 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, Act of June 11, 1968, (P.L. 149, No. 84), as amended, 53 P.S. § 8501 et seq. (commonly referred to as Act 84), for the period January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2008.

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 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 Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's administration of state aid and accumulated 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 Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2008, 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, 2006 to December 31, 2008, found, in all significant respects, the Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association received and expended funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures, except as noted in the following findings discussed later in this report. The results of our tests indicated the Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the accompanying information and as of December 31, 2008, had a cash balance of \$29,908 and no investments.

Finding No. 1 – Undocumented Expenditures

Finding No. 2 – Failure to Provide Minutes of Meetings

Finding No. 3 – Inadequate Financial Record-Keeping System

Finding No. 4 – Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report.

June 30, 2009

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General



FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has complied with the following prior audit findings and recommendations:

- Unauthorized Expenditure

By receiving reimbursement in the amount of \$10,606, from the affiliated fire department, for the training room construction expenditure that was considered unauthorized in the prior audit period. In addition, the relief association did not make any unauthorized expenditures during the current audit period.

- Failure to Obtain a Federal Tax Identification Number

By providing documentation from the Internal Revenue Service showing that the relief association has its own federal tax identification number.

- Failure to Maintain a Pennsylvania State Sales Tax Exemption Number

By obtaining a state sales tax exemption number from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue.

FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Undocumented Expenditures

Condition: The relief association was unable to provide adequate supporting documentation for the following expenditures:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Payee Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
04/26/06	813	Financial institution	\$ 11,386
12/01/07	1113	Insurance provider	4,167
09/23/08	EFT	Electronic withdrawal	50,000
11/14/08	1159	Insurance provider	3,523
Total			<u>\$ 69,076</u>

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8507(a) states, in part:

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

Without adequate supporting documentation, such as detailed invoices, this department is unable to determine if the relief association funds were expended for purposes authorized by Act 84. Furthermore, good business practices would require that supporting documentation be maintained to verify 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 invoices, made it impossible to determine if the expenditures were made in accordance with Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8506(e).

However, subsequent to the current audit period, on July 1, 2009 and October 2, 2009, the relief association received reimbursement in the amounts of \$7,690 and \$11,386, respectively, from the affiliated fire department. In addition, on July 11, 2009, the relief association presented an agreement with the fire department enumerating the relief association's \$50,000 contribution towards the purchase of a fire department vehicle.

FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association officials maintain adequate 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 presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – Failure to Provide Minutes of Meetings

Condition: The relief association did not provide minutes of meetings as required by Act 84. At the time of the audit engagement, the relief association did not furnish any minutes of meetings for our examination.

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505(a) states, in part, that the relief association:

. . . must provide for the taking and preserving of minutes of all meetings, and the maintenance of such books of account as may be necessary and appropriate to afford a permanent record of its financial affairs.

Cause: Relief association officials were aware that maintaining minutes of meetings was required by Act 84 but failed to provide the minutes at the time of the audit engagement.

Effect: Without detailed minutes of meetings, verification that relief association business was presented before the membership for approval does not exist.

However, subsequent to the current audit period, on July 11, 2009, the relief association provided copies of the meeting minutes for the years 2006, 2007, and 2008.

Recommendation: We recommend relief association officials maintain a permanent record of all relief association meetings as required by Act 84 and ensure these minutes are available for examination at the time of the audit engagement. The minutes should include an adequate record of all financial-related business conducted by the relief association. Furthermore, the minutes should be available for review at the time of the audit. 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.

FOREST GROVE 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, and does not meet the minimum requirements of maintaining financial records established by this department. The following are the noted deficiencies:

- A complete and accurate journal was not maintained to record the receipts and disbursements of the relief association. The journal provided did not include any transactions prior to October 10, 2006.
- Ledgers were not utilized in 2006 or 2008 to record the transactions of the relief association accounts.
- Documentation to support various expenditures was not available for examination at the time of the audit. (see Finding No. 1)
- Annual financial statements were not prepared.

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505 (a) states, in part, that the relief association:

. . . must provide for the taking and preserving of minutes of all meetings, and the maintenance of such books of account as may be necessary and appropriate to afford a permanent record of its financial 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 meets the minimum record-keeping requirements of this department. 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.

FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 4 – Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

Condition: The relief association officials did not maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. An updated roster detailing the equipment items purchased was not provided for the current audit period. While a roster had been maintained for equipment purchased dating back to September 1985, it was incomplete since none of the equipment purchased since August 29, 2005, was recorded. Furthermore, there was no indication that an inventory of the equipment was performed to account for the relief association's fixed assets.

Criteria: 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 fixed assets. A cumulative roster of all relief association equipment should include the following:

- Type of equipment purchased.
- Date of purchase.
- Unit cost.
- Name of supplier.
- Serial number, if applicable.
- Current location of item.
- Final disposition of sold or damaged equipment.
- Notation of the annual inventory.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over fixed assets to include the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster and the performance of an annual equipment inventory.

Effect: The 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 equipment inventory prevents adequate accountability and safeguarding of relief association assets.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association officials maintain a cumulative roster of all relief association owned equipment. Furthermore, the relief association should ensure it performs an annual inventory of all operable equipment and that the inventory be sufficiently documented. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 4 – (Continued)

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.

FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2006 TO DECEMBER 31, 2008

Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8502(1) states, in part, that:

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. Such an association may also serve other purposes, . . . provided only that adequate provisions be first made to serve its primary purpose. . . .

Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8506, 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. 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	\$ 55,899
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	25
Total Benefit Services	\$ 55,924
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 9,612
Equipment maintenance	7,272
Training expenses	3,350
Total Fire Services	\$ 20,234
Administrative Services:	
Miscellaneous administrative expenses	\$ 224
Total Administrative Services	\$ 224
Other Expenditures:	
Undocumented expenditures	\$ 69,076
Total Other Expenditures	\$ 69,076



FOREST GROVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Forest Grove Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Edward Ritter, President

Mr. Craig Cannella, Secretary

Mr. Tim Plank, Treasurer

Reports were also distributed to each municipality, which allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association.

Ms. Mildred Cvengros, Secretary  
Robinson Township

This report is a matter of public record. Copies of this report may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 318 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. If you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter, you may contact the Department of the Auditor General by accessing our website at [www.auditorgen.state.pa.us](http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us).