

**VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF MAR-LIN, PENNSYLVANIA**

**SCHUYLKILL COUNTY**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

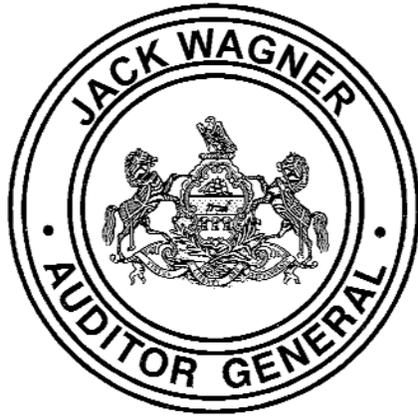
**FOR THE PERIOD**

**JANUARY 1, 2008 TO DECEMBER 31, 2009**



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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 Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of Mar-Lin, Pennsylvania, herein referred to as Mar-Lin 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. The Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Norwegian Township	Schuylkill	\$8,331	\$7,611

BACKGROUND (Continued)

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

Mar-Lin Citizens Hose Company

Mr. A. Scott Palokas, President  
MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Schuylkill County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Mar-Lin 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, 2008 to December 31, 2009.

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 Mar-Lin 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. 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 Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2009, 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, 2008 to December 31, 2009, found the Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association did not take appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report, as detailed below and discussed in the Status of Prior Findings section of this report. In addition, the results of our audit found the Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association, in all significant respects, received 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 in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report. The results of our tests also indicated the Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2009, had a cash balance of \$9,495 and no investments.

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Membership Roster

Finding No. 3 – Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

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

July 7, 2010

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General

MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has not complied with the following prior audit findings. These findings are noted below and discussed in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws
- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Membership Roster

We are concerned with the volunteer firefighters' relief association's failure to correct the previously reported audit findings. The association management should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective actions noted in this audit report.

MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws

Condition: As cited in our prior audit report, the existing bylaws of the Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association do not contain all of the provisions required by Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c). Specifically, the bylaws do not address the requirements for securing membership and for the disbursing officer to be bonded by corporate surety.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(1 and 4) states, that the relief association's bylaws shall:

- (1) Specify the requirements for securing membership, voting rights of different classes of members, if there be different classes, and conditions under which membership may be terminated.
  
- (4) Require 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 funds of the association.

Cause: While notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials failed to amend the relief association bylaws to meet the bylaw provisions required by Act 118.

Effect: As a result of the mandatory provisions not being included in the bylaws, the relief association may have conducted its affairs without proper authorization and relief association assets were not properly safeguarded.

Recommendation: We again recommend that relief association officials review and update the bylaws governing their organization so that the bylaws meet the requirements set forth in Act 118 and properly authorize the operating procedures, and safeguard assets, of the relief association. 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.

MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Membership Roster

Condition: As cited in our prior audit report, the relief association officials did not maintain a complete and accurate roster of relief association members.

Criteria: Relief association officials should maintain a complete and accurate roster of the relief association's membership, as identified by criteria set forth in the relief association's bylaws. A comprehensive roster of all relief association members should include the following:

- Names of each member;
- Members' mailing addresses;
- Dates of births;
- Dates of memberships; and
- Membership classifications.

In addition, when applicable, a notation should be made on the roster identifying the date of a member's resignation or death.

Cause: While notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again failed to maintain a comprehensive roster of relief association members.

Effect: The failure to maintain a comprehensive membership roster could result in the payment of benefits to nonmembers, or deprive eligible relief association members from receiving authorized benefit payments.

Recommendation: We again recommend the relief association officials compile and maintain a complete and accurate roster of the relief association's membership. For additional 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.

MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 3 – 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. While equipment rosters were maintained by the relief association in prior audit periods, they did not furnish an updated roster that included the equipment purchased during the current audit period. In addition, there was no evidence of an annual physical inventory of relief association equipment.

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 equipment roster of all relief association equipment should include the following:

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

Furthermore, sound business practice requires the performance of an annual physical inventory of all relief association owned equipment.

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

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 physical inventory of fixed assets prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association fixed assets.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association officials maintain a cumulative equipment roster of all relief association owned equipment. 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.

MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 3 – (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.

MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2008 TO DECEMBER 31, 2009

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	\$ 4,731
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	152
Total Benefit Services	\$ 4,883
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 6,047
Equipment maintenance	879
Total Fire Services	\$ 6,926
Administrative Services:	
Miscellaneous administrative expenses	\$ 14
Total Administrative Services	\$ 14
Other Expenditures:	
Principal payments on loan	\$ 10,821
Total Other Expenditures	\$ 10,821

MAR-LIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Mar-Lin Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. A. Scott Palokas, President

Mr. Steve Mattera, Vice President

Ms. Nicole Berzowski, Secretary

Mr. James Santai, Treasurer

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

Mr. Stanley Petchulis, Sr., Secretary  
Norwegian 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).