



**THE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF LOWER MAHANNOY  
FIRE COMPANY**

**HEREIN REFERRED TO AS:**

**LOWER MAHANNOY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**FOR THE PERIOD**

**JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007**



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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 Lower Mahanoy 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 Lower Mahanoy Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>
Little Mahanoy Township	Northumberland	\$ 415	\$ 417	\$ 459
Lower Mahanoy Township	Northumberland	\$4,874	\$4,899	\$4,965

BACKGROUND (Continued)

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

Lower Mahanoy Fire Company

Mr. Nicholas Schaffner, President  
LOWER MAHANOH VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Northumberland County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Lower Mahanoy 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, 2005 to December 31, 2007.

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 finding 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 Lower Mahanoy 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 applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures significant within the context of the audit objectives. We also tested transactions, confirmed the Lower Mahanoy Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash balance as of December 31, 2007, with the custodian of the funds, and interviewed selected officials to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objectives.

The results of our audit for the period January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2007, found, in all significant respects, the Lower Mahanoy 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 Lower Mahanoy Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the accompanying information and as of December 31, 2007, had a cash balance of \$3,857 and no investments.

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

Finding No. 2 – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

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

Finding No. 4 – Insufficient Officer's Bond Coverage

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

July 1, 2008

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General

LOWER MAHANOY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Lower Mahanoy Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has not complied with the prior audit finding. This issue is further discussed in the following finding noted in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws

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

LOWER MAHANOY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Condition: As cited in the prior audit report, the existing bylaws of the Lower Mahanoy Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association do not accurately describe the various classes of relief association members, as required by Act 84, and appears to extend death benefits to social members, which are not authorized by Act 84. Article III of the relief association bylaws states, in part, that membership into the relief association is provided to the entire paid membership of the Lower Mahanoy Fire Company of Dalmatia, PA. According to relief association officials, this would also include "social members."

Furthermore, the relief association bylaws provide for the payment of a death benefit; however, the only requirement to receive benefits is that the member be in "good standing" for five years. According to the relief association officials, "good standing" means that the member has paid their annual fire company dues. While benefits are authorized by Act 84, extending benefits to individuals who do not participate, or have not actively participated in the fire service, is not considered authorized by Act 84.

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8503(3) states, in part:

The purpose of the Legislature in enacting this statute is to encourage individuals to take part in the fire service as volunteer firefighters, by establishing criteria and standards for the orderly administration and conduct of the affairs of the firefighters' relief associations, so as to ensure, as far as circumstances will reasonably permit, that funds shall be available for the protection of volunteer firefighters and their heirs:

- (3) to provide, either by insurance or by the operation of a beneficial fund, for the payment of a sum certain to the designated beneficiaries of a **participating member** in such fund following the death of such member for any cause, and **to establish criteria which members must meet in order to qualify** as participants in such death benefit fund. (emphasis added)

In addition, Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505 (b) states:

The constitution or charter shall state the name, the purposes and the form of the organization, **shall designate the class or classes of persons eligible for membership**, and procedures to be followed in making amendments. (emphasis added)

LOWER MAHANOHY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Furthermore, Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505 (c) states, in part, that the relief association's bylaws shall:

Specify the requirements of securing membership, the voting rights of different classes of members, if any, and the conditions under which membership may be terminated.

While a relief association's bylaws could contain more restrictive provisions than Act 84, its bylaws cannot provide for benefits that are not authorized by Act 84.

Cause: While notified of this condition in the prior audit report, relief association officials neglected to amend the relief association bylaws to meet the bylaw provisions required by Act 84.

Effect: As a result of the various classes of members not being accurately defined, the relief association's bylaws appear to provide benefits, including death benefits, to individuals who are not entitled to benefits.

Recommendation: We again recommend that relief association officials review and amend the bylaws governing their organization so that the bylaws meet the requirements set forth in Act 84. Specifically, the bylaws should include language that limits benefits only to individuals who formerly participated or currently participate in providing fire service. Until the bylaws are amended to meet the requirements of Act 84, the relief association should immediately discontinue the payment of death benefits on behalf of individuals who have not participated in fire service. Any future payment of death benefits for individuals who have not participated in fire service will be considered unauthorized 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 indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

LOWER MAHANOY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

Condition: For the audit period, the relief association did not maintain minutes of meetings, as required by Act 84.

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 unaware that maintaining minutes of meetings was required by Act 84.

Effect: The failure to maintain minutes of meetings prevented the verification as to whether relief association business was presented before the membership for approval.

Recommendation: We recommend relief association officials maintain a permanent record of all relief association meetings as required by Act 84. The minutes should include an adequate record of all financial-related business conducted by 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.

LOWER MAHANOHY 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 a listing of equipment was provided, it did not contain dates of purchase, unit costs, name of suppliers, or serial numbers, where available, to accurately identify the equipment owned. As such, it was impossible to determine if all items purchased during the audit period had been accurately 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.

LOWER MAHANOHY 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.

LOWER MAHANOHY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 4 – Insufficient Officer's Bond Coverage

Condition: For a portion of the audit period, the relief association did not maintain a bond in a sufficient amount to cover the authorized disbursing officer. Specifically, from November 11, 2005 to July 1, 2006, the amount of the relief association's cash assets exceeded the bond coverage amount of \$10,000.

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505(c) states, in part, that:

. . . the disbursing officer, whether designated treasurer, comptroller, financial secretary, or otherwise, shall be bonded by corporate surety for the faithful performance of his duties. The amount of such 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 such bond shall be a proper charge against the funds of the association.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to monitor the cash balance to ensure the officer's bond coverage was in compliance with Act 84 provisions.

Effect: As a result of the disbursing officer of the relief association being insufficiently bonded for a portion of the audit period, the relief association's cash assets were not adequately safeguarded.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association ensure that a faithful performance bond adequately covers the disbursing officer at all times, as required by Act 84. This requirement may be accomplished by increasing the officer's bond coverage to an amount greater than the expected maximum balance of cash assets, or by decreasing the cash assets to an amount anticipated to remain below the coverage amount. Relief association officials should monitor the cash balance to ensure that unexpected events affecting current funds do not again result in an insufficient officer's bond coverage. 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.

LOWER MAHANOHY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

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	\$ 500
Total Benefit Services	\$ 500
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 17,183
Equipment maintenance	442
Total Fire Services	\$ 17,625
Administrative Services:	
Miscellaneous administrative expenses	\$ 1,495
Total Administrative Services	\$ 1,495

LOWER MAHANOY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Lower Mahanoy Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Officers:

Mr. Nicholas Schaffner, President

Ms. Jennifer Chubb, Secretary

Mr. Randy Schaffner, Treasurer

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

Ms. Lisa Williard, Secretary  
Little Mahanoy Township

Ms. Carol J. Witmer, Secretary  
Lower Mahanoy 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).