



**SUEDBERG VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**HEREIN REFERRED TO AS:**

**SUEDBERG VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**SCHUYLKILL 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 Suedberg 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 Suedberg 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>
Pine Grove Township	Schuylkill	\$13,048	\$12,950	\$13,479

BACKGROUND (Continued)

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

Suedberg Volunteer Fire Company

Mr. Bert Witmer, President  
SUEDBERG VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Schuylkill County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Suedberg 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 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 Suedberg 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 Suedberg Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's investment balance and the cash balance as of December 31, 2008, 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, 2006 to December 31, 2008, found, in all significant respects, the Suedberg 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 finding discussed later in this report. The results of our tests indicated the Suedberg Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the accompanying information and as of December 31, 2008, had a cash balance of \$36,202 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$7,327.

Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inappropriate Presigning of Blank Checks

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

January 27, 2009

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General

SUEDBERG VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

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

- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inappropriate Presigning of Blank Checks

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 recommendation and corrective action noted in this audit report.

SUEDBERG VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inappropriate Presigning of Blank Checks

Condition: As cited in the prior audit report, a review of the relief association's checkbook revealed that 3 blank checks were presigned by one of the two relief association officials who are authorized to sign checks. The presigning of blank checks negates the relief association's internal control over the disbursement process.

Criteria: Checks should be signed and co-signed only after each authorized person has reviewed and approved the nature, purpose, and propriety of each expenditure.

Cause: While notified of this condition in the prior audit report, the relief association neglected to establish internal control procedures to prevent the presigning of blank checks.

Effect: The practice of presigning blank checks prevents the relief association from maintaining an adequate segregation of duties necessary to ensure the proper safeguarding of its assets.

Recommendation: We again recommend that the practice of presigning blank checks be immediately discontinued. Furthermore, checks prepared for each expenditure should accompany the invoice and any other supporting documentation. This will enable each authorized official to review the nature, purpose, and propriety of each expenditure prior to signing the check. 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.

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

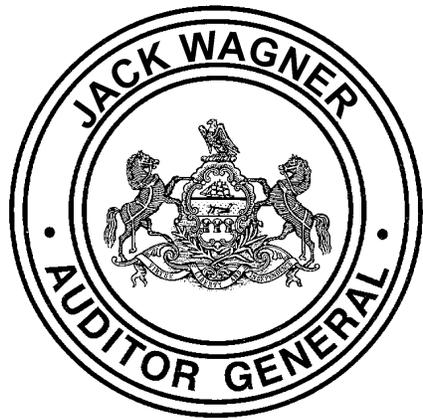
Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8502(1) states, in part, that:

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	\$ 1,111
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	37
Total Benefit Services	\$ 1,148
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 28,387
Equipment maintenance	2,772
Training expenses	730
Total Fire Services	\$ 31,889
Administrative Services:	
Officer compensation	\$ 1,350
Other administrative expenses	625
Total Administrative Services	\$ 1,975



SUEDBERG VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Suedberg Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Officers:

Mr. Bert Witmer, President

Ms. Debra Krout, Secretary

Mr. Daniel A. Strausser, Treasurer

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

Ms. Kathy Ferguson, Secretary  
Pine Grove 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).