
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

 Auditor General Tim DeFoor  PaAuditorGen  PaAuditorGen  www.paauditor.gov



News for Immediate Release

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Auditor General DeFoor: Audit Shows West Chester VFRA Spent Over \$5,500 in State Aid on Alcohol for Firefighter Dinner

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Timothy DeFoor today warned volunteer firefighter relief associations across Pennsylvania that state aid cannot be used to purchase alcohol, pointing to a finding in his new audit of the West Chester Volunteer Firemen’s Relief Association (VFRA) in Chester County.

The [West Chester VFRA audit](#) identified a total of \$7,380 in unauthorized expenses, the largest of which was \$5,544 in alcohol purchased in September 2019 for a firefighter retention dinner. Other unauthorized expenses flagged by auditors included a \$500 gift card and \$236 in food purchases.

“While I understand that recruiting and retaining firefighters is a challenge in communities across Pennsylvania, picking up the tab for drinks is not something state taxpayers should be asked to do,” DeFoor said. “That state aid funding could have been better spent on equipment to keep firefighters safe while they work to save lives and protect property.”

The audit, which covered the period of Jan. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2019, recommends that the VFRA be reimbursed by its affiliated fire departments for the unauthorized expenditures identified by the audit. VFRA officials blamed the alcohol purchase on an oversight.

The West Chester VFRA is legally separate from the three affiliated fire companies it supports: Fame Fire Company No. 3; First West Chester Fire Company; and Good Will Fire Company No. 2. The association receives state funds through six local municipalities.

The audit also noted that the West Chester VFRA had only \$1 million in surety bond coverage, despite having nearly \$1.6 million in cash assets at the end of the audit period.

The Department of the Auditor General distributes state aid to VFRAs and also audits how they use the funds, which are generated by a 2 percent tax on fire insurance policies sold in Pennsylvania by out-of-state companies. In 2020, \$60.25 million went to 2,518 municipalities for distribution to VFRAs to provide training, purchase equipment and insurance, and pay for death benefits for volunteer firefighters.

Review the [West Chester VFRA audit report](#) and learn more about the Department of the Auditor General online at www.paauditor.gov.

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