

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## The Elrama Volunteer Fire Company and Relief Association Washington County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018

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January 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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**EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Michael Settlemaier, President  
The Elrama Volunteer Fire Company  
and Relief Association  
Washington County

We have conducted a compliance audit of The Elrama Volunteer Fire Company and Relief Association (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, 2017 to December 31, 2018.

The objective of the audit was to determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds. Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above and was not required to be and was not conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the 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. Relief association officers are responsible for complying with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018, the relief association, in all significant respects, complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds, except as noted in the finding listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding – Unauthorized Expenditure

The supplementary financial information contained in this report is presented for purposes of additional disclosure and analysis. We performed only limited procedures on the supplementary financial information and, accordingly, express no form of assurance on it.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association and, where appropriate, their response has been included in the report. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

January 21, 2020



EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE  
Auditor General

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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 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 volunteer firefighters' relief associations. Relief association bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which relief associations conduct 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 relief associations 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 that is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality.

**BACKGROUND – (Continued)**

The relief association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Union Township	Washington	\$15,135	\$13,845

The volunteer firefighters’ relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The relief association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

The Elrama Volunteer Fire Company

THE ELRAMA VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY AND RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – Unauthorized Expenditure**

**Condition:** The relief association expended \$501 for insurance on a fire company owned vehicle during the current audit period that is not authorized by Act 118.

**Criteria:** Section 7416(f) of Act 118 states:

The funds of any volunteer firefighters’ relief association may be spent:

- (1) To pay for such normal and reasonable running expenses as may be appropriate to the businesslike conduct of the affairs of the association, including legal fees, rental or purchase of offices, payment of reasonable compensation of employees and purchase of office equipment and supplies.
- (2) To purchase contracts of insurance which, at a minimum, shall afford financial assistance to active members of the fire service represented by the association against losses due to injury suffered in the fire service and may also provide, in the order named: (i) for payments to the surviving spouse or other dependents of a member in the event of the member’s death; (ii) for protection of active firefighters against disease; (iii) for replacement or purchase of prosthetic devices such as visual aids, hearing aids, dentures, braces, crutches and the like, where those devices have been lost or damaged while the owner was engaged in the fire service or where the need for those devices arose because of functional impairment attributable to participation in the fire service; (iv) for repair or replacement, if necessary, of articles of clothing or pocket pagers damaged or lost in the course of participation in the fire service; and (v) for disability incurred after service for a minimum of 20 years as a volunteer firefighter.

Costs associated with the purchase of insurance for a fire company owned vehicle do not qualify as an authorized volunteer firefighters’ relief association expenditure; consequently, this disbursement is not authorized under Act 118.

**Cause:** Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware that the expenditure for the insurance for the fire department was not authorized by Act 118.

**Effect:** As a result of this improper expenditure, relief association funds were not available for investment purposes or to pay for expenditures authorized by Act 118.

THE ELRAMA VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY AND RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – (Continued)**

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$501 for the unauthorized expenditure and that relief association officials become familiar with Section 7416(f) of Act 118 to aid them in determining the propriety of 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 as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.



THE ELRAMA VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY AND RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
CASH BALANCE  
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

Cash	<u>\$ 47,204</u>
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THE ELRAMA VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY AND RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES  
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2017 TO DECEMBER 31, 2018

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	\$ 24,267
Death benefits	9,000
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 33,267</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 20,866
Equipment maintenance	6,191
Training expenses	760
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 27,817</u>
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	<u>\$ 147</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Unauthorized expenditure	<u>\$ 501</u>
Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 61,732</u></u>

THE ELRAMA VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY AND RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

**The Honorable Tom W. Wolf**  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Elrama Volunteer Fire Company and Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Michael Settlemaier**  
President

**Mr. Lenny Bailey**  
Secretary

**Mr. Jonathan Madaras**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Nicole L. Wright**  
Secretary  
Union Township

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov). Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: [news@PaAuditor.gov](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov).