

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Hempfield Fire Department Relief Association

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018

February 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Douglas S. Howard, President
Hempfield Fire Department
Relief Association
Lancaster County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Hempfield Fire Department 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 objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report.
2. 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 objectives 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 objectives. 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 took appropriate corrective action to address four of the six findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the two remaining findings contained in our prior audit report, as listed below and discussed in the Status of Prior Findings section of this report.
- 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 findings listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Unauthorized Expenditures

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 responses have 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.

February 6, 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>
East Hempfield Township	Lancaster	\$74,382	\$67,814

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:

Hempfield Fire Department

HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relief association has complied with four of the six prior audit findings and recommendations, as follows:

- Undocumented Expenditures

By receiving reimbursement of \$23,545 from the affiliated fire company for the undocumented expenditures that were made in the prior audit period.

- Failure To Secure Ownership Interest In Jointly Purchased Vehicles And Equipment

By executing written formal agreements with the affiliated fire company that adequately secures its proportional ownership interest in the jointly purchased vehicles and equipment.

- Inadequate Internal Controls

By adopting sufficient internal control procedures to adequately safeguard relief association assets and ensure the propriety of all relief association transactions.

- Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings

By maintaining detailed minutes of all relief association meetings held during the period.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relief association has not complied with two of the six prior audit findings. These findings are noted below and discussed in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Unauthorized Expenditures

Although the relief association received reimbursement of \$24,000 from the affiliated fire company for the unauthorized expenditures that were made in the prior audit period, the relief association again expended funds in the current audit period that were not authorized by Act 118 as further disclosed in Finding No. 2 of this report.

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

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

HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain
A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster**

Condition: The relief association failed to maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. Although a listing of relief association owned equipment was provided during the current audit period, it was incomplete because it did not contain the names of suppliers (vendors), dates of purchase, cost of equipment and serial numbers to accurately identify equipment owned by the relief association, and it does not appear to have been updated since 2014. As such, it was impossible to determine if all equipment purchased during the audit period in the amount of \$176,436 was recorded. Although the listing provided indicated that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis, we are unsure how all inventory was accounted for without maintaining a complete and accurate roster of relief association owned equipment.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that 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 equipment. A cumulative equipment roster of all relief association equipment should include all of the following:

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

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over equipment by requiring the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster and the performance of an annual physical inventory of equipment.

Effect: The continued 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 equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association equipment.

HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

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

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: We are concerned by the relief association’s failure to correct this previously reported audit finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Unauthorized Expenditures

Condition: The relief association expended funds for the following items during the current audit period that are not authorized by Act 118:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
05/17/2018	2151	Grant writing services	\$ 1,350
10/23/2018	2173	Grant writing services	500
Total			<u>\$ 1,850</u>

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

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.

- (11) To purchase safeguards for preserving life, health and safety of volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the volunteer fire service.

Costs associated with grant writing do not qualify as authorized volunteer firefighters' relief association expenditures; consequently, these disbursements are not authorized under Act 118.

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware that the aforementioned expenditures were not authorized by Act 118.

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

Recommendation: We recommend that the 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, as a result of our audit, the affiliated fire company reimbursed the relief association \$1,850 for the unauthorized expenditures on November 19, 2019.

Auditor's Conclusion: We reviewed documentation verifying that the reimbursement of \$1,850 was received. Compliance for expenditures made during the next audit period will be subject to verification through our next audit.

HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
CASH BALANCE
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

Cash	<u>\$ 115,408</u>
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HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION
 SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2017 TO DECEMBER 31, 2018

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	\$ 13,686
Relief benefits	1,424
Total Benefit Services	\$ 15,110
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 176,436
Equipment maintenance	23,126
Training expenses	10,170
Fire prevention materials	1,600
Total Fire Services	\$ 211,332
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	\$ 6,505
Other Expenditures:	
Unauthorized expenditures	\$ 1,850
Total Expenditures	\$ 234,797

HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Hempfield Fire Department Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Douglas S. Howard
President

Ms. Tiffanie L. Howard
Secretary

Mr. Jerome Stevens
Treasurer

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

Ms. Cindy A. Schweitzer
Secretary
East Hempfield Township

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at 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.