

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Nisbet Volunteer Fire Company's Relief Association

Lycoming County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021

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June 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Michael Steinbacher, President  
Nisbet Volunteer Fire Company's  
Relief Association  
Lycoming County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Nisbet Volunteer Fire Company's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 72 P.S. § 403; and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"), see 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding 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, nor was it required to be, conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

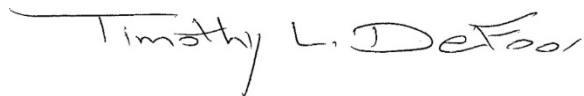
Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the relief association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures, 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, 2019 to December 31, 2021:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit 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 finding listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roaster

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy L. DeFoor  
Auditor General  
June 6, 2022

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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<sup>1</sup>, and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act<sup>2</sup> ("VFRA Act"), 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<sup>3</sup> (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.

The VFRA Act 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, the VFRA Act authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by the VFRA Act, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 72 P.S. § 403 (as last amended by Act 44 of 2017).

<sup>2</sup> 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.* See specifically, 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418 (amended by Act 91 of 2020).

<sup>3</sup> 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (Act 205 of 1984, as amended by Act 119 of 1990).

## BACKGROUND – (Continued)

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Bastress Township	Lycoming	\$ 967	\$ 976	\$ 903*
Susquehanna Township	Lycoming	\$5,273	\$5,293	\$4,777

\* Although Bastress Township prepared and returned a Certification Form AG 385 for 2021, the township failed to submit a 2021 Receipt And Distribution Of Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Form 706-B to this department as required by the instructions accompanying Form 706-B and the instructions accompanying the 2021 state aid allocation received by the township disclosing this information.

**Bastress Township is still required to complete a 2021 Receipt And Distribution Of Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Form 706-B online within the Department of Community & Economic Development's Municipal Statistics website (MunStats) immediately.**

Based on the relief association's records, its total cash as of December 31, 2021 was \$7,762, as illustrated below:

Cash	<u><u>\$ 7,762</u></u>
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## BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021 were \$14,566, as noted below. The accuracy of these expenditures was evaluated as part of the Department's audit to conclude on the relief association's compliance 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.<sup>4</sup> **The scope of the Department's audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of these amounts.**

### Expenditures:

#### Benefit Services:

Insurance premiums	\$ 6,774
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#### Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 1,179
Equipment maintenance	2,477
Training expenses	1,813

Total Fire Services	\$ 5,469
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#### Administrative Services:

Other administrative expenses	\$ 1,781
Bond premiums	384

Total Administrative Services	\$ 2,165
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#### Other Expenditures:

Unauthorized expenditure *	\$ 158
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Total Expenditures	\$ 14,566
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\* During 2019, the relief association made a disbursement in the amount of \$158 which was not authorized by the VFRA Act. We disclosed this issue to relief association officials on March 22, 2022. We did not include a finding in this report due to the relatively low dollar amount.

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:

Nisbet Volunteer Fire Company

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<sup>4</sup> Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

NISBET VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

- Failure To Maintain Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

By maintaining Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage in an amount greater than the balance of the relief association's cash assets.



NISBET VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster**

Condition: The relief association provided a roster for the current audit period; however, they did not provide a cumulative roster. In addition, there was no indication that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis, nor whether such inventory accounted for all equipment owned by the relief association.

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: The relief association officials stated that the Fire Chief did not provide the cumulative equipment roster.

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 physical inventory of equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association equipment.

Recommendation: We 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: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

NISBET VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

**Mr. Charles J. McGarvey, Sr.**  
State Fire Commissioner

Nisbet Volunteer Fire Company's Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Michael Steinbacher**  
President

**Ms. Luci Steinbacher**  
Secretary

**Ms. Barb Steppe**  
Treasurer

The following municipalities allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association and received a copy of this report:

**Ms. Patricia A. Dincher**  
Secretary  
Bastress Township

**Ms. Cheryl L. Kurtz**  
Secretary  
Susquehanna 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).