

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

The Relief Association of the Ogontz Fire Company Montgomery County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022

September 2023



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Stephen Workman, President
The Relief Association of the Ogontz
Fire Company
Montgomery County

We have conducted a compliance audit of The Relief Association of the Ogontz Fire Company (relief association) for the period January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022. 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.

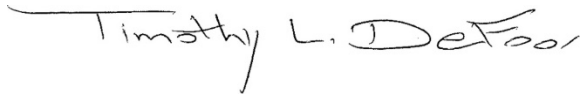
The objective of the audit was to determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds. Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above and was not, 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 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, 2020, to December 31, 2022, 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 Document That Annual Physical Equipment Inventories Were Conducted

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 style with a horizontal line above the first name.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
August 31, 2023

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code¹, and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act² ("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 Law³ (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.

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

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

³ 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 municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Cheltenham Township	Montgomery	\$45,493	*	*

* During the current audit period, the relief association did not receive an allocation of state aid from Cheltenham Township in 2021 and 2022. Municipalities have sole discretion to distribute their annual allocation of state aid received to any relief association providing fire service to the municipality.

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash as of December 31, 2022, was \$389,207, as illustrated below:

Cash	<u>\$ 389,207</u>
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BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022, were \$225,576, 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.⁴ **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	\$ 84,794
Relief benefits	92,649
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 177,443</u>

Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 23,487
Equipment maintenance	22,106
Training expenses	1,007
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 46,600</u>

Administrative Services:

Bond premiums	\$ 750
Other administrative expenses	783
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 1,533</u>

Total Expenditures	<u>\$ 225,576</u>
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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:

Ogontz Fire Company

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

THE RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF THE OGONTZ FIRE COMPANY
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Failure To Document That Annual Physical Equipment Inventories Were Conducted

Condition: As cited as a verbal observation in our prior audit, the relief association officials failed to provide evidence that it conducted annual physical inventories of equipment and ensure such inventory accounted for all equipment owned by the relief association.

Criteria: Sound business practice dictates that annual inventories are conducted to ensure the accuracy of the relief association’s equipment roster.

Cause: The relief association officials stated that annual physical inventories of equipment are performed; however, they do not maintain adequate documentation. Relief association officials stated that photographs of equipment are taken but the equipment roster is not marked to show that all equipment was reviewed.

Effect: The failure to perform an annual physical inventory of equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association owned equipment.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials ensure they perform an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment and that the completion of the inventories 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 neither agreed nor disagreed 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 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF THE OGONTZ FIRE COMPANY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Relief Association of the Ogontz Fire Company Governing Body:

Mr. Stephen Workman
President

Mr. John Washington, Jr.
Vice President

Mr. Art Gordon, Jr.
Secretary

Mr. Philip Washington
Treasurer

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

Ms. Alyson Elliott
Secretary
Cheltenham 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.