

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Petrolia Volunteer Fire Relief Association Butler County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018

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September 2019



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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**EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. James Barnes, President  
Petrolia Volunteer Fire  
Relief Association  
Butler County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Petrolia Volunteer Fire 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 – Untimely Receipts And Deposits Of State Aid

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.

September 6, 2019



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 municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Perry Township	Armstrong	\$1,245	\$1,146
Fairview Borough	Butler	\$ 816	\$ 744
Fairview Township	Butler	\$5,346	\$4,880
Karns City Borough	Butler	\$ 474*	\$ 432*
Petrolia Borough	Butler	\$1,014	\$ 923

\* The 2017 and 2018 state aid allocations received from Karns City Borough were not deposited by the relief association until January 23, 2018 and January 23, 2019, respectively, as disclosed in the finding in this report.

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:

Petrolia Volunteer Fire Department

PETROLIA VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – Untimely Receipts And Deposits Of State Aid**

Condition: The relief association did not deposit the 2017 and 2018 state aid allocations it received from Karns City Borough, in the amounts of \$474 and \$432, until January 23, 2018 and January 23, 2019, respectively. The foreign fire insurance tax allocations were distributed to the municipal treasurer on September 25, 2017 and September 25, 2018, who forwarded the state aid to the relief association on December 30, 2017 and December 10, 2018, respectively, which is not within 60 days of receipt, as required by Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205). In addition, upon receipt of the state aid allocations, the relief association did not ensure the funds were deposited timely into a relief association account.

Criteria: Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), states:

The foreign fire insurance premium tax amount applicable to a municipality served solely by volunteer firefighters shall be paid to the municipality, which shall within 60 days of the date of the receipt of the moneys from the State Treasurer pay the amount received to the relief association fund of the fire department or departments, or fire company or companies, now existing or hereafter organized, inside or outside of the municipality, which is or are actively engaged in the service of the municipality and duly recognized by the governing body of the municipality.

Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that upon receipt of its state aid allocation, the relief association should establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the funds are deposited in a timely manner.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish internal control procedures to ensure that all income due the relief association was received, recorded and deposited into a relief association account in a timely manner.

Effect: As a result of the untimely receipts and deposits, funds were not available to pay general operating expenses or for investment purposes. In addition, untimely receipts and deposits of funds increases the risk that funds could be lost or misappropriated.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials adopt internal control procedures to ensure the timely receipt and deposit of all future income received. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

PETROLIA VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – (Continued)**

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.



PETROLIA VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
CASH AND INVESTMENT BALANCES  
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

Cash	\$ 16,504
Fair Value of Investments	<u>65,067</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u>\$ 81,571</u>

PETROLIA VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2017 TO DECEMBER 31, 2018

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	\$ 4,332
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 1,707
Equipment maintenance	3,238
Training expenses	706
Total Fire Services	\$ 5,651
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	\$ 1,851
Bond premiums	273
Total Administrative Services	\$ 2,124
Total Investments Purchased	\$ 3,000
Total Expenditures	\$ 15,107

PETROLIA VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

Petrolia Volunteer Fire Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. James Barnes**  
President

**Ms. Alysha Bricker**  
Secretary

**Mr. Thomas L. Bullman**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Mary Jean Shumaker**  
Secretary  
Perry Township

**Ms. Burnadette C. Jack**  
Secretary  
Fairview Borough

**Ms. Dusty Neff**  
Secretary  
Fairview Township

**Ms. Sharon McElravy**  
Secretary  
Karns City Borough

**Ms. Abby G. Walowen**  
Secretary  
Petrolia Borough

PETROLIA VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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