

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Ringtown Valley Fire And Rescue Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association

Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019

July 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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**EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Ms. Mariana Gorski-Gilbert, President
Ringtown Valley Fire And Rescue Volunteer
Firefighters' Relief Association
Schuylkill County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Ringtown Valley Fire And Rescue Volunteer Firefighters' 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, 2018 to December 31, 2019.

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, 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.

We were not able to obtain an independent confirmation of the investment balance directly from the financial institution. Therefore, while the relief association provided copies of investment statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2019, the relief association had an investment balance with a fair value of \$62,302, we were not able to verify this investment balance.


In addition, due to a stay at home order issued by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to observe any of the relief association's original invoices to verify legitimacy and we were also unable to observe any of the relief association's equipment to verify its existence.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, except for the effects, if any, of the matters described in the two preceding paragraphs, for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings 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.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

July 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.

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Ringtown Borough	Schuylkill	\$3,318	\$3,563
Union Township	Schuylkill	\$7,085	\$7,540

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association's records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2019 were \$74,279, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$	11,977
Fair Value of Investments		62,302
Total Cash and Investments	\$	<u>74,279</u>

Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019 were \$33,425, 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.¹ **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	\$	<u>3,182</u>
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Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$	16,236
Equipment maintenance		11,675
Training expenses		660
Total Fire Services	\$	<u>28,571</u>

Administrative Services:

Other administrative expenses	\$	1,028
Bond premiums		644
Total Administrative Services	\$	<u>1,672</u>

Total Expenditures	\$	<u>33,425</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:

Ringtown Valley Fire Company

¹ Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

RINGTOWN VALLEY FIRE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws

By revising the relief association bylaws to meet the minimum requirements of Act 118.

- Failure To Maintain Minutes Of Meetings

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

We commend the relief association management for its efforts in complying with the findings and recommendations contained in the prior audit report. The association management should strive to remain in compliance with all applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures.

RINGTOWN VALLEY FIRE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Ringtown Valley Fire And Rescue Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Ms. Mariana Gorski-Gilbert
President

Ms. Taya Stevenosky
Secretary

Mr. Robert P. Knipe
Treasurer

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

Ms. Gina Mays
Secretary
Ringtown Borough

Mr. Robert F. Murray
Secretary
Union 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.