

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## South Connellsville Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

Fayette County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2017

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December 2018



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Jeremy S. Grubbs, President  
South Connellsville Volunteer Firemen's  
Relief Association  
Fayette County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the South Connellsville Volunteer Firemen's 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, 2015 to December 31, 2017.

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, 2015 to December 31, 2017:

- The relief association did not take appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report, as detailed 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 –  
Undocumented Expenditures

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure To Maintain Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

Finding No. 3 – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate  
Membership Roster

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.

December 6, 2018



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>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
South Connellsville Borough	Fayette	\$ 9,145	\$ 9,154	\$ 8,411

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:

South Connellsville Volunteer Fire Department

SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Undocumented Expenditures

Although the relief association provided documentation for the undocumented expenditures that were made in the prior audit period, the relief association again failed to provide adequate documentation to support all expenditures in the current audit period as further disclosed in Finding No. 1 of this report.

- Failure To Maintain Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

Although the relief association provided documentation to correct the bonded dispersing officer from the Secretary to the Treasurer, they failed to maintain their bond policy that expired on July 12, 2016 as further disclosed in Finding No. 2 of this report.

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

SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Undocumented Expenditures**

Condition: Although the relief association officials provided adequate supporting documentation for the undocumented expenditures made in the prior audit period, the relief association was unable to provide adequate supporting documentation for the following expenditures made during the current audit period:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Payee Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
01/16/15	479	Equipment purchase	\$ 152
12/08/16	503	Affiliated fire company	515
Total			<u>\$ 667</u>

Criteria: Section 7418(a) of Act 118 states:

The Office of Auditor General shall have the power and its duty shall be to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters' relief association receiving money under Chapter 7 of the Act of December 18, 1984 (P.L. 1005, No. 205), known as the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act, as far as may be necessary to satisfy the Auditor General that the money received was or is being expended for no purpose other than that authorized by this subchapter. Copies of all audits shall be furnished to the Governor.

Without adequate supporting documentation, such as invoices and/or itemized receipts, this department is unable to determine whether relief association funds were expended for purposes authorized by Act 118. Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that supporting documentation be maintained to evidence the propriety of all financial transactions.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure supporting documentation is maintained for all expenditures.

Effect: Lack of supporting documentation, such as invoices and/or itemized receipts, made it impossible to determine if the expenditures were made in accordance with Section 7416(f) of Act 118. In addition, the failure to maintain adequate supporting documentation for relief association expenditures can lead to an increased risk of errors occurring and funds being misappropriated.



SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – (Continued)**

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials provide this department with adequate supporting documentation, such as invoices and/or itemized receipts, to ensure the propriety of the expenditures or that the relief association be reimbursed \$667 for the undocumented expenditures. We also recommend that the relief association officials maintain supporting documentation for all 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 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 – Failure To Maintain Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage**

Condition: Although the relief association officials changed the bond coverage from the Secretary to the Treasurer, the relief association again failed to maintain Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on its authorized disbursing officer, as required by Act 118. The relief association's Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage expired on July 12, 2016. As of December 31, 2017, the relief association's cash assets totaled \$3,770.

Criteria: Section 7415(c)(4) of Act 118 states, in part, that:

. . . the disbursing officer, whether designated treasurer, comptroller, financial secretary or otherwise, shall be bonded by corporate surety for faithful performance of duty. The amount of the bond shall be at least as great as the maximum cash balance in current funds of the association at any time during the fiscal year, and the premium on the bond shall be a proper charge against the funds of the association.

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to comply with the Act 118 provisions requiring the maintenance of Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer.

## SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Finding No. 2 – (Continued)**

Effect: As a result of the authorized disbursing officer of the relief association not being bonded, the relief association's cash assets were not adequately safeguarded.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials maintain Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer in an amount greater than the relief association's maximum cash balance, as required by Act 118. 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 relief association renewed their Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage in an amount greater than the cash balance on October 26, 2018.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

### **Finding No. 3 – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Membership Roster**

Condition: The relief association officials did not maintain a complete and accurate roster of relief association members.

Criteria: Relief association officials should maintain a complete and accurate roster of the relief association's membership, as identified by criteria set forth in the relief association's bylaws. A comprehensive roster of all relief association members should include the following:

- Names of each member
- Members' mailing addresses
- Dates of births
- Dates of memberships
- Membership classifications

In addition, when warranted, a notation should be made on the roster identifying the date of a member's resignation or death.

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were aware that they should maintain a comprehensive roster of relief association members, but failed to comply.

Effect: The failure to maintain a comprehensive membership roster could result in the payment of benefits to nonmembers, or deprive eligible relief association members from receiving authorized benefit payments.

SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 3 – (Continued)**

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials compile and maintain a complete and accurate roster of the relief association's membership. For additional 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.

SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
CASH BALANCE  
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2017

Cash	<u>\$ 3,770</u>
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SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES  
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2015 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	<u>\$        7,882</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$      85,099
Equipment maintenance	5,025
Training expenses	<u>1,406</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$      91,530</u>
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	\$          483
Bond premiums	<u>25</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$          508</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Undocumented expenditures	<u>\$          667</u>
Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$     100,587</u></u>

SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

South Connellsville Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Jeremy S. Grubbs**  
President

**Mr. James Porterfield**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Darla Hann**  
Secretary  
South Connellsville Borough

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).