COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Susquehanna Township Fireman's Relief Association Dauphin County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021

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 Modica, President Susquehanna Township Fireman's Relief Association Dauphin County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Susquehanna Township Fireman's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2018 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 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 for a portion of the cash balance and the investment balance directly from the financial institution. Therefore, while the relief association provided bank and investment statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2021, the relief association had a cash balance of \$292,181 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$619,852, we were not able to verify a portion of the cash balance and the investment balance.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address one of the four findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the three remaining findings contained in our prior audit report, as listed below and discussed in the Status of Prior Findings section of this report.
- Because of the significance of the matters described in Finding Nos. 4 and 5 below and discussed later in this report and the effects, if any, of the matter described in the preceding paragraph, the relief association did not, in all significant respects, comply 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, collectively as a whole. Therefore, the relief association may be subject to the potential withholding of its upcoming state aid distribution, as discussed in the Potential Withhold of State Aid section of this report.

Finding No. 1	_	Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Undocumented Expenditures
Finding No. 2	_	Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster
Finding No. 3	_	Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws
Finding No. 4	—	Inappropriate Ownership Of Rescue Vehicles
Finding No. 5	_	Failure To Secure Ownership Interest In Jointly Purchased Equipment

Three of the five audit findings contained in this report cite conditions that existed in the operation of the relief association during the prior audit period and were not corrected during the current audit period. We are concerned by the number of findings noted and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendations noted in this audit report.

We have also issued the observation below as detailed in the Observation section of this report.

Observation - FDIC Coverage Limits Exceeded

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.

Janet B. Cincomppe

Janet B. Ciccocioppo, CPA Deputy Auditor General for Audits May 2, 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 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:

Municipality	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Susquehanna Township	Dauphin	\$148,385	\$162,002	\$162,066	\$144,498	
Based on the relief association's records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2021 were \$912,033, as illustrated below:						
Cash			\$ 2	292.181		

Cash	\$ 292,181
Fair Value of Investments	 619,852
Total Cash and Investments	\$ 912,033

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021 were \$1,069,367, 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	\$ 95,260
Relief benefits	950
Total Benefit Services	\$ 96,210
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 524,767
Equipment maintenance	199,263
Training expenses	58,532
Fire prevention materials	2,473
Total Fire Services	\$ 785,035
Administrative Services:	
Officer compensation	\$ 2,625
Other administrative expenses	11,696
Bond premiums	 2,098
Total Administrative Services	\$ 16,419
Total Investments Purchased	\$ 171,581
Other Expenditures:	
Miscellaneous	\$ 75
Unauthorized expenditure*	47
Total Other Expenditures	\$ 122
Total Expenditures	\$ 1,069,367

^{*} During 2020, the relief association made an insignificant disbursement in the amount of \$47 which was not authorized by the VFRA Act. We disclosed this issue to relief association officials on April 4, 2022.

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

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

The volunteer firefighters' relief association and the affiliated fire service organizations are separate, legal entities. The relief association is affiliated with the following fire service organizations:

Progress Fire Company

Rescue Fire Company No. 1

SUSQUEHANNA TOWNSHIP FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

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

• Failure To Define Discretionary Benefits

By amending the association's bylaws to reflect the amount of \$250 being paid quarterly as officer's compensation to the relief association's treasurer.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- <u>Undocumented Expenditures</u>
- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster
- Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws

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

<u>Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Undocumented</u> <u>Expenditures</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The relief association was unable to provide adequate supporting documentation for the following expenditures made during the prior audit period:

Date	Check No.	Payee Description		/	Amount
11/01/16	521	Individual for training		\$	590
11/01/16 07/24/17	522 600	Affiliated fire company for training Equipment/maintenance vendor			2,681 461
			Total	\$	3,732

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Section 7418(a) of the VFRA Act 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.

Prudent business practice dictates that supporting documentation be maintained to evidence the propriety of all financial transactions.

<u>Cause</u>: The relief association officials did not provide a reason for why this occurred despite the relief association being notified of this condition during our prior audit.

<u>Effect</u>: Lack of supporting documentation, such as invoices, itemized receipts and detailed minutes of meetings, made it impossible to determine if the expenditures were made in accordance with Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act. 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

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

<u>Recommendation</u>: 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 \$3,732 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.

<u>Management's Response</u>: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented and stated increased diligence will be applied to the monitoring of expenditures.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

<u>Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain</u> <u>A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The relief association failed to maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. Although a listing of relief association owned equipment was provided during the current audit period, this listing was incomplete as it did not document any equipment purchases prior to 2018. In addition, the equipment roster did not accurately identify all of the equipment owned by the relief association. The relief association purchased \$524,767 of equipment during the current audit period, but the equipment for \$3,552 of those purchases was not properly accounted for on the relief association's equipment roster. Finally, there was no indication that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis to account for the equipment owned by the relief association.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

<u>Criteria</u>: 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

<u>Cause</u>: The relief association officials stated current personnel were unaware of the requirement pertaining to the taking of annual physical counts of equipment. Relief association officials did not provide a specific reason for why a cumulative roster for all equipment was not maintained.

<u>Effect</u>: The continued 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.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again 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.

<u>Management's Response</u>: Relief association management agreed with the finding and stated a full inventory count is being taken immediately to bring the inventory into compliance.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

<u>Finding No. 3 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Relief</u> <u>Association Bylaws</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The existing bylaws of the relief association do not clearly address all of the provisions required by Section 7415(c) of the VFRA Act. Specifically, the bylaws do not address the requirement of having the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Section 7415(c) of the VFRA Act states that the relief association's bylaws shall:

(3) Require that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer, shall be required to bind the association by formal contract or to issue a negotiable instrument.

<u>Cause</u>: The failure to include this bylaw requirement was an oversight on the part of the relief association officials.

<u>Effect</u>: As a result of the mandatory provisions not being included in the bylaws, the relief association may have conducted its affairs without proper authorization.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again recommend that the relief association officials review and update the bylaws governing their organization so that the bylaws meet the requirements set forth in the VFRA Act and properly authorize the operating procedures of the relief association. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: Relief association management agreed with the finding and stated the bylaws will be amended immediately.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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. 4 – Inappropriate Ownership Of Rescue Vehicles

<u>Condition</u>: On July 11, 2019, the relief association purchased an inflatable rescue boat, in the amount of \$6,211, to carry personnel and safeguard equipment; however, documentation was not provided in the form of a title to prove relief association ownership. Furthermore, on October 7, 2021, the relief association purchased a second inflatable rescue boat in the amount of \$6,072 to carry personnel and safeguard equipment. Likewise, documentation was not provided in the form of a title to prove relief association ownership.

<u>Criteria</u>: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should maintain sole ownership of all equipment purchased by the relief association. As such, rescue boats purchased by the relief association are to be titled in the name of the relief association.

<u>Cause</u>: The relief association officials did not understand/were unaware of the necessity to title the two inflatable boats in the name of the relief association.

<u>Effect</u>: As a result of the documentation being unavailable to prove the two boats were titled in the name of the relief association, these relief association assets may not be properly safeguarded. Furthermore, the relief association's future state aid allocations may be withheld until the finding recommendation is complied with.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We recommend that the rescue boats be titled in the name of the relief association. If such action is not taken, we recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$12,283 (\$6,211 + \$6,072). For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: Relief association management agreed with the finding and stated the titles for the two boats will document relief association ownership.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: Due to the potential withhold of state aid, the relief association's compliance with the finding recommendation will be monitored subsequent to the release of the audit report and through our next audit of the relief association.

Finding No. 5 – Failure To Secure Ownership Interest In Jointly Purchased Equipment

<u>Condition</u>: On December 29, 2018, the relief association expended \$7,194 on fabrication work (metal forming work) for two vehicles/vehicle apparatus not owned by the relief association without properly securing its ownership interest, as detailed below:

Date	Check No.	Description	Amount		
12/29/18 12/29/18	809 809	Fabrication work on a Seagrave Tower Ladder Fabrication work on a Pierce Rescue Engine	\$	3,926 3,268	
		Total	\$	7,194	

Criteria: Section 7418(a) of the VFRA Act 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.

Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should secure its proportional ownership interest in the vehicles through written agreement that enumerate the relief association's proportional share of the cost of the vehicles. Such agreement shall specify that the relief association shall receive its prorated share of the proceeds upon sale of the vehicles, in the event the vehicles are ever sold.

<u>Cause</u>: The failure to generate written agreements documenting the relief association's financial interests in the fabrication expenditures was an oversight on the part of the relief association officials.

<u>Effect</u>: The failure to adequately secure the proportional share of ownership interest in the vehicles for which relief association paid for fabrication work places the relief association's ownership interest at greater risk. Furthermore, the relief association's future state aid allocations may be withheld until the finding recommendation is complied with.

Finding No. 5 – (Continued)

<u>Recommendation</u>: We recommend that the relief association officials execute a formal written agreement with the entity that owns each of the vehicles that enumerates the relief association's proportional ownership interest in the vehicles as well as stipulating that the proportionate sales proceeds shall revert to the relief association in the event the vehicles are ever sold. While it appears a previous agreement is in effect for the Pierce Rescue Engine, this agreement would need to be amended to account for the additional funds expended on this vehicle. If such action is not taken, we recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$7,194. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: Relief association management agreed with the finding and stated agreements will be created with the municipality recognizing the relief association's financial interests in the two vehicles for which the fabrication work was performed.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: Due to the potential withhold of state aid, the relief association's compliance with the finding recommendation will be monitored subsequent to the release of the audit report and through our next audit of the relief association.

SUSQUEHANNA TOWNSHIP FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OBSERVATION

Observation – FDIC Coverage Limits Exceeded

The relief association failed to ensure that all cash deposits were below the FDIC coverage limits per account ownership in one institution. As of December 31, 2021, the relief association's ending cash balance with the financial institution amounted to \$284,683.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) is an independent agency of the United States government that protects the funds depositors place in banks and savings associations. FDIC insurance is backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government.

FDIC insurance covers all deposit accounts, including:

- Checking accounts
- Savings accounts
- Money market accounts
- Certificates of deposit

FDIC insurance does not cover other financial products and services that banks may offer, such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, life insurance policies, annuities and securities. The standard insurance amount is \$250,000 per depositor, per insured bank, for each account ownership category.

Section 7413 of the VFRA Act states that the purpose of this subchapter is to encourage individuals to take part in the fire service as volunteer firefighters by establishing criteria and standards for orderly administration and conduct of affairs of firefighters' relief associations to ensure as far as circumstances will reasonable permit, that the funds shall be available for the protection of the volunteer firefighters' and their heirs.

Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that in addition to performing monthly bank reconciliations, the relief association should ensure the relief association's cash balance does not exceed FDIC limits set by banking regulations. Lack of effective monitoring of relief association cash and investment assets places the relief association funds at greater risk for loss.

The relief association should monitor all cash and investment assets that are eligible for FDIC insurance and ensure the balance of those assets per banking institution does not exceed FDIC coverage limits.

SUSQUEHANNA TOWNSHIP FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION POTENTIAL WITHHOLD OF STATE AID

Conditions such as those reported by Finding Nos. 4 and 5 contained in this audit report may lead to a total withholding of state aid in the future unless those findings are corrected. However, such action may not be considered if sufficient documentation is provided within 60 days to verify compliance with this department's recommendations. Such documentation should be submitted by the relief association to: Department of the Auditor General, Bureau of Fire Relief Audits, Room 327 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

SUSQUEHANNA TOWNSHIP FIREMAN'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

Susquehanna Township Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Michael Modica President

Mr. William Gaiski Vice President

Mr. Jamie Kleckner Secretary

Mr. Brian Hockenberry Treasurer

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

Mr. David Pribulka Secretary Susquehanna Township

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at <u>www.PaAuditor.gov.</u> 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.