

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Taylorstown Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association

Washington County, Pennsylvania  
For the Period  
January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2016

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March 2018



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Randy Sochor, President  
Taylorstown Volunteer Fireman's  
Relief Association  
Washington County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Taylorstown Volunteer Fireman'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, 2016.

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, 2016:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address two of the three findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the one remaining finding contained in our prior audit report, as listed 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 –  
Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement of  
Funds

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Financial Record-Keeping System

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.

February 22, 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 municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Blaine Township	Washington	\$3,892*	\$3,891
Buffalo Township	Washington	\$6,241*	\$6,434

\* The 2015 state aid allocations from Blaine Township and Buffalo Township were withheld due to the Order To Show Cause (OTSC) that was in place at the time. When the relief association complied with the two findings disclosed on the Status of Prior Findings page in this report, the OTSC was withdrawn on February 2, 2016 and the municipalities received their 2015 state aid allocations on February 18, 2016. Consequently, the 2015 state aid allocations received from Blaine Township and Buffalo Township were not deposited by the relief association until March 19, 2016.

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:

Taylorstown Volunteer Fire Company

TAYLORSTOWN VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Undocumented Expenditures

By receiving reimbursement of \$82,453 from the affiliated fire company in the form of a 2000 Pierce Pumper Fire Engine titled in the name of the relief association with the appraised amount of \$90,000 for the undocumented expenditures that were made in the prior audit period.

- Unauthorized Expenditures

By receiving reimbursement of \$6,161 from the affiliated fire company in the form of a 2000 Pierce Pumper Fire Engine titled in the name of the relief association with the appraised amount of \$90,000 for the unauthorized expenditures made in the prior audit period.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The relief association has not complied with one of the three prior audit findings. This finding is noted below and discussed in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds

We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding. The association management should strive to implement the recommendation and corrective action noted in this audit report.

TAYLORSTOWN VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds**

Condition: During the current audit engagement, we identified two checks out of 36 checks drawn on the relief association's checking account that only contained the signature of one officer, even though two signatures are required by Act 118 and the relief association bylaws. Issuing checks with the signature of only one officer negates the relief association's internal control over the disbursement process.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(3) states, in part:

The bylaws shall 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.

In addition, Article VII, Section 1, of the relief association's bylaws states:

The signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the Treasurer, shall be required for the issuance of relief association checks, withdrawal from the association savings account, the redemption of any relief association investment or on any other negotiable instrument issued by the association

Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that the relief association has sufficient internal control procedures in place to ensure the signatures of at least two relief association officials are included on all negotiable instruments. Adequate internal control procedures require that checks be signed only after the propriety of the expenditure has been determined and the payee, date, and amount to be paid has been confirmed. Additionally, responsible relief association officers should compare this information with supporting documentation, such as invoices, contracts, etc., prior to approving the checks.

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to establish adequate internal control procedures that require the signatures of at least two officers on all negotiable instruments.

Effect: As a result of the relief association officer issuing checks with only one signature, assets were placed at greater risk as expenditures were being made without a second relief association officer having the opportunity to verify the propriety of the expenditures. The application of the second signature, after evaluating the propriety of the expenditure, reduces the risk of misappropriation and the risk of errors occurring and going undetected.

TAYLORSTOWN VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – (Continued)**

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the treasurer, are included on all relief association negotiable instruments as defined by Act 118 and the relief association bylaws. 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 – Inadequate Financial Record-Keeping System**

Condition: The relief association's financial record-keeping system did not establish adequate accounting procedures to allow the membership to effectively monitor the relief association's financial operations and to provide effective control over cash receipts, disbursements, and assets. The following are the noted deficiencies:

- A journal was not maintained to record the receipts and disbursements of the relief association.
- Ledgers were not utilized to record the transactions of the relief association accounts.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(a) states:

A volunteer firefighters' relief association may be a body corporate, governed by a charter and bylaws or an unincorporated association of individuals governed by bylaws and a constitution. In either case, it must provide for taking and preserving minutes of all meetings and maintenance of such books of account as may be necessary and appropriate to afford a permanent record of its fiscal affairs.

In addition, an adequate system of accounting and record-keeping is a prerequisite for sound administration of relief association assets.

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware of their various record-keeping responsibilities.

TAYLORSTOWN VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 2 – (Continued)**

Effect: The failure of relief association officials to maintain adequate records prohibits the membership from effectively monitoring the relief association's financial operations.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials establish and maintain a financial record-keeping system that allows the membership to effectively monitor the relief association's financial operations and provides effective control over cash receipts, disbursements, and assets. 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: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

TAYLORSTOWN VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
CASH BALANCE  
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2016

Cash	<u>\$ 14,163</u>
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TAYLORSTOWN VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES  
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2015 TO DECEMBER 31, 2016

Expenditures:

Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 34,654
Equipment maintenance	<u>2,093</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 36,747</u>

Administrative Services:

Other administrative expenses	\$ 210
Bond premiums	<u>200</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 410</u>

Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 37,157</u></u>
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TAYLORSTOWN VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

Taylorstown Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Randy Sochor**  
President

**Mr. Don Alan Shriver**  
Vice President

**Ms. Tracy Belcastro**  
Secretary

**Mr. Bob Buchanan**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Lisa Stasiowski**  
Secretary  
Blaine Township

**Mr. Timothy Doman**  
Secretary  
Buffalo Township

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).