

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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Western Berks Fire Department  
Relief Association  
Berks County, Pennsylvania  
For the Period  
January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018

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July 2019



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Christopher Sayers, President  
Western Berks Fire Department  
Relief Association  
Berks County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Western Berks Fire Department 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.

We were not able to obtain an independent confirmation of the cash balance directly from the financial institution. Therefore, while the relief association provided bank statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2018, the relief association had a cash balance of \$278,176, we were not able to verify this cash balance.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, except for the effects, if any, of the matter described in the preceding paragraph, 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.

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

Observation – FDIC Coverage Limits Exceeded

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. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.



July 3, 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:

Municipality	County	2017	2018
Lower Heidelberg Township	Berks	\$38,267	\$35,165
Sinking Spring Borough	Berks	\$22,404	\$20,401
South Heidelberg Township	Berks	\$44,178	\$40,138
Wernersville Borough	Berks	\$12,764	\$11,589

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:

Western Berks Fire Department

WESTERN BERKS FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
OBSERVATION

**Observation – FDIC Coverage Limits Exceeded**

As disclosed in a verbal observation in the two previous audits, the relief association again failed to ensure that all cash deposits were below the FDIC coverage limits per account ownership in one institution. As of December 31, 2018, the relief association's ending cash balance with the financial institution amounted to \$278,176.

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 Act 118 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.

WESTERN BERKS FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
CASH BALANCE  
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

Cash	\$ <u>278,176</u>
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**WESTERN BERKS FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES  
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2017 TO DECEMBER 31, 2018**

**Expenditures:**

**Benefit Services:**

Insurance premiums	\$ 18,158
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	305
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 18,463</u>

**Fire Services:**

Equipment purchased	\$ 148,189
Equipment maintenance	33,755
Training expenses	11,564
Fire prevention materials	2,427
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 195,935</u>

**Administrative Services:**

Other administrative expenses *	\$ 5,973
Bond premiums	882
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 6,855</u>

**Total Expenditures** \$ 221,253

\* A portion of the miscellaneous expenditures was for relief association database management contracted services in the amount of \$3,110.

WESTERN BERKS FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

Western Berks Fire Department Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Christopher Sayers**  
President

**Mr. Jason Stine**  
Vice President

**Mr. Avery Lasher**  
Secretary

**Ms. Diana Porter**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Pamela Stevens**  
Secretary  
Lower Heidelberg Township

**Ms. Elizabeth A. Eagelman**  
Secretary  
Sinking Spring Borough

**Mr. David A Schaeffer**  
Secretary  
South Heidelberg Township

**Ms. Debra A. Pierce**  
Secretary  
Wernersville Borough

WESTERN BERKS FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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).