



**FAIRFIELD HOSE COMPANY FIREFIGHTERS RELIEF  
ASSOCIATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF  
PENNSYLVANIA**

**ERIE COUNTY**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**FOR THE PERIOD**

**JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012**

**RELEASED APRIL 2014**

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE - AUDITOR GENERAL**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL**





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**EUGENE A. DePASQUALE**  
**AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Jeffrey Hawryliw, President  
FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Erie County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' 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, 2009 to December 31, 2012.

We conducted this compliance audit in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* applicable to performance audits, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the volunteer firefighters' relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report; and
2. To determine if the volunteer firefighters' relief association received state aid and expended state aid and accumulated relief funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objectives identified above.

Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' 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. In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the volunteer firefighters' relief association's internal controls as they relate to the association's compliance with those requirements and that we considered to be significant within the context of the audit objectives, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented. Our audit procedures also included tests of documentary evidence supporting the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2012, with the custodians of the funds, debtors, creditors, and financial institutions to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. Additionally, we performed procedures to provide a reasonable assurance of detecting instances of violations of legal and regulatory requirements or violations of provisions of contracts that are significant within the context of the audit objectives.

The results of our audit, for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012, found the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association took appropriate corrective action to address one of the four findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' 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. In addition, the results of our audit found the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association, in all significant respects, received state aid and expended state aid and accumulated relief funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures, except as noted in the findings listed below and discussed later in of this report. The results of our tests also indicated the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2012, had a cash balance of \$127,409 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$193,803.

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure to Comply With Terms of Loan Agreement

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Undocumented Expenditures

Finding No. 3 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Unsecured Loan and Inadequate Signature Authority

Finding No. 4 – Unauthorized Expenditure

Finding No. 5 – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

Finding No. 6 – Inadequate Signatory Authority for the Disbursement of Funds

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report.

July 19, 2013

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eugene A. DePasquale". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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 Fairfield Hose Company Firefighters Relief Association of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, herein referred to as Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' 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 the volunteer firefighters' relief association. The relief association's bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which the volunteer firefighters' relief association conducts 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 the volunteer firefighters' relief association 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, which is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality. The Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Harborcreek Township	Erie	\$31,055	\$34,954	\$54,880	\$31,164

BACKGROUND (Continued)

The volunteer firefighters' relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

Fairfield Hose Company

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has complied with the following prior audit finding and recommendation:

- Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

By maintaining a cumulative inventory roster of all equipment owned by the relief association.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' 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:

- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure to Comply With Terms of Loan Agreement

Although the relief association received outstanding loan and interest payments in the amount of \$2,457 from the affiliated fire company during the current audit period, a similar condition occurred during the current audit period as disclosed in Finding No. 1 contained in this report.

- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Undocumented Expenditures

Although the relief association received reimbursement from the affiliated fire company amounting to \$1,353 for the undocumented expenditures disclosed in the prior audit period, a similar condition occurred during the current audit period as disclosed in Finding No. 2 contained in this report.

- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Unsecured Loan and Inadequate Signature Authority

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

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure to Comply With Terms of Loan Agreement

Condition: As disclosed in the Status of Prior Finding section of this report, although the relief association received \$2,457 in delinquent loan and interest payments from the affiliated fire company, additional delinquent loan and interest payments occurred during the current audit period amounting to \$4,507 that were due to the relief association.

Criteria: The terms of the loan agreement state that payments of \$717 will be due on a monthly basis, beginning on May 14, 2004, and ending on November 14, 2010. The interest rate is 3 percent.

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, the relief association again, neglected to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure loan payments would be collected in accordance with the payment schedule outlined in the loan agreement.

Effect: Due to the relief association not receiving the scheduled loan payments, funds were not available for general operating expenses or for investment purposes.

As a result of our audit, and subsequent to the audit period, on February 28, 2013, the relief association received loan and interest payments amounting to \$4,518 from the affiliated fire company for the pay-off amount of the unsecured loan and interest.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association ensure that for any future loans entered into by the relief association, that payments are received in accordance with the loan agreement. 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, took the corrective action noted above and indicated they continue to comply with the recommendation in subsequent audit periods.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Undocumented Expenditures

Condition: As disclosed in the Status of Prior Finding section of this report, although the relief association received reimbursement from the affiliated fire company in the amount of \$1,353 for the undocumented expenditures made in the prior audit period, the relief association made additional undocumented expenditures during the current audit period as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Payee Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
04/01/09	816	Vendor	\$ 169
05/11/09	822	Vendor	354
		Total	<u>\$ 523</u>

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418(a) 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), [FN1] 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, 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: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials neglected to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure supporting documentation is maintained for all expenditures.

Effect: Lack of supporting documentation, such as invoices, made it impossible to determine if the expenditures were made in accordance with Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416(f). 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.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

As a result of our audit, and subsequent to the audit period, on February 28, 2013, the relief association received reimbursement in the amount of \$535 from the affiliated fire company for the undocumented expenditures.

Recommendation: We 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, took the corrective action noted above and indicated they will continue to comply with the recommendation in subsequent periods.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 3 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Unsecured Loan and Inadequate Signature Authority

Condition: As cited in our prior audit report, the relief association made an unsecured loan to a married couple who were members of the relief association, in the amount of \$1,688. In addition, the signature of only one relief association officer was used to execute the loan agreement with the relief association members, even though the signatures of at least two relief association officers are required in accordance with Act 118.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416(c)(3) requires that loans be:

. . . (i) secured by assets of the company having capital value equal to at least 150% of the amount of the obligation at the time it is made; (ii) subject to provisions which amortize the loan at a rate ensuring that the depreciated value of the assets pledged shall continue to be at least 150% of the balance due.

In addition, 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.

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials were unaware that the relief association failed to take action to remedy the situation based on our prior audit recommendation.

Effect: Failure to obtain adequate security for the loan places the investment at greater risk. In addition, as a result of the relief association not obtaining two signatures on the loan agreement, assets were placed at greater risk of misappropriation.

As a result of our audit, and subsequent to the audit period, the relief association received reimbursement on February 28, 2013, in the amount of \$1,917 from the affiliated fire company for the unsecured loan and interest.

Recommendation: We recommend that relief association officials ensure that future loans require the signatures of at least two relief association officers, as defined by Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(3). For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 3 – (Continued)

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference, took the correction action noted above and indicated they will continue to comply with the recommendation in subsequent periods.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 4 – Unauthorized Expenditure

Condition: The relief association expended \$1,000 for a hardship benefit (loan) that is not authorized by Act 118.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416(f)(1, 6 and 11) states:

The funds of any volunteer firefighters' relief association may be spent:

- (1) To pay for such normal and reasonable running expenses as may be appropriate to the businesslike conduct of the affairs of the association, including legal fees, rental or purchase of offices, payment of reasonable compensation of employees and purchase of office equipment and supplies.
- (6) To make cash payments to families in distressed circumstances by reason of age, infirmity or other disability suffered by one of the family members in the course of participation in the fire service as a volunteer firefighter.
- (11) To purchase safeguards for preserving life, health and safety of volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the volunteer fire service.

The cost associated with providing hardship benefits does not qualify as an authorized volunteer firefighters' relief association expenditure; consequently, this disbursement is not authorized under Act 118.

Cause: Relief association officials were unaware that the expenditure for the hardship benefit (loan) was not authorized by Act 118.

Effect: As a result of this improper expenditure, relief association funds were not available for investment purposes or to pay for expenditures authorized by Act 118.

As a result of our audit, and subsequent to the audit period, the relief association received reimbursement in the amount of \$1,000 on February 28, 2013, for the unauthorized hardship benefit.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association officials become familiar with Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416(f) to aid them in determining the propriety of future expenditures. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 4 – (Continued)

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference took the corrective action as noted above and indicated they will continue to comply with the recommendation in subsequent periods.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 5 – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

Condition: The relief association did not maintain minutes of meetings as required by Act 118.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(a) states, in part, that the relief association:

. . . 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.

Cause: Although relief association officials were aware that maintaining minutes of meetings was required by Act 118, the relief association's computer failed and no backup files were maintained from January 1, 2009 to April 1, 2011.

Effect: Without detailed minutes of meetings, evidence that relief association business was presented before the membership for approval does not exist.

Recommendation: We recommend relief association officials maintain a permanent record of all relief association meetings as required by Act 118. The minutes should include an adequate record of all financial-related business conducted by the relief association. 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.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 6 – Inadequate Signatory Authority for the Disbursement of Funds

Condition: During the current audit engagement, we identified 57 checks out of 140 checks drawn on the relief association's checking account that only contained the signature of one officer, although two signatures are required, pursuant to 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.

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 IV, Section V, of the relief association's bylaws states:

It shall be the duty of the Treasurer accept and receive all funds of the Association and deposit same in a banking institution as designated by the Fairfield Hose Company Firefighters Relief Association, keep a true and regular account of all receipts and expenditures of the Association, make all payments of the Association by bank check to be co-signed by the President or Vice-President.

Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that the relief association have 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 expenditures have 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, contract, etc., prior to approving the checks.

Cause: Relief association officials neglected to establish adequate internal control procedures which 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 for errors occurring and going undetected, and reduces the risk of misappropriation.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

Finding No. 6 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend 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. 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.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7412 states: a volunteer firefighters' relief association is an organization formed primarily for the purpose of affording financial protection to volunteer firefighters against the consequences of misfortune suffered as a result of their participation in the fire service. The organization may contain within its membership the members of one or more fire companies and may serve secondary purposes, as set forth in this subchapter, but only if adequate provisions have been first made to serve the primary purpose.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416 authorizes the investment of relief association funds and outlines the types of benefits and services that can be provided with volunteer firefighters' relief association funds.

Furthermore, all expenditures must be properly authorized as prescribed in the volunteer firefighters' relief association bylaws and approved at an association meeting.

USES OF FUNDS:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	\$ 16,754
Relief benefits	1,576
Total Benefit Services	\$ 18,330
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 243,984
Equipment maintenance	18,640
Training expenses	8,874
Total Fire Services	\$ 271,498
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	\$ 5,584
Total Administrative Services	\$ 5,584
Other Expenditures:	
Undocumented expenditures	\$ 522

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Fairfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Jeffrey Hawryliw	President
Ms. Christine Morelli	Vice President
Ms. Stephany Konetsky	Secretary
Mr. Michael Krahe	Treasurer

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

Mr. Dean Pepicello, Secretary  
Harborcreek Township

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.auditorgen.state.pa.us](http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us). Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 231 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: [news@auditorgen.state.pa.us](mailto:news@auditorgen.state.pa.us).