

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Centre Hall Firemen's Relief Association of Centre Hall, PA Centre County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013

January 2015



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Jackie Muthersbaugh, Jr., President
CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Centre County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Centre Hall 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, 2011 to December 31, 2013.

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 finding 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 Centre Hall 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 Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2013, 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, 2011 to December 31, 2013, found the Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association did not take appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report, as detailed below and discussed in the Status of Prior Finding section of this report. In addition, the results of our audit found the Centre Hall 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 this report.

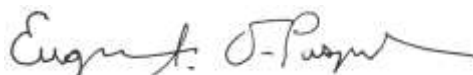
Finding No. 1 – Untimely Deposit Of State Aid

Finding No. 2 – Inappropriate Ownership Of Rescue Vehicle

Finding No. 3 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation-Failure
To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

The results of our tests also indicated the Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2013, had a cash balance of \$52,528 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$51,870.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their response has 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.

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

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

January 7, 2015

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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 Centre Hall Firemen's Relief Association of Centre Hall, PA, herein referred to as the Centre Hall 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.

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

The Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

| <u>Municipality</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>2011</u> | <u>2012</u> | <u>2013</u> |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Centre Hall Borough | Centre | \$ 12,657 | \$ 7,173 | \$ 8,179 |
| Potter Township | Centre | \$ 43,960 | \$ 24,964 | \$ 28,653 |

The Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association did not deposit the 2013 state aid allocation from Centre Hall Borough, in the amount of \$8,179, until January 30, 2014 as discussed in Finding No. 1 contained in this report.

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

Centre Hall Fire Company

CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has not complied with the following prior audit finding. This finding is noted below and discussed in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

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.

CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Untimely Deposit Of State Aid

Condition: The volunteer firefighters' relief association did not deposit the 2013 state aid allocation it received from Centre Hall Borough, in the amount of \$8,179, until January 30, 2014. The foreign fire insurance tax allocation was distributed to the municipal treasurer on September 23, 2013, who forwarded this state aid to the volunteer firefighters' relief association on October 1, 2013, which is within 60 days of receipt, as required by Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205). However, upon receipt of the state aid allocation, the relief association did not ensure the funds were deposited in a timely manner.

Criteria: Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), states:

The foreign fire insurance premium tax amount applicable to a municipality served solely by volunteer firefighters shall be paid to the municipality, which shall within 60 days of the date of the receipt of the moneys from the State Treasurer pay the amount received to the relief association fund of the fire department or departments, or fire company or companies, now existing or hereafter organized, inside or outside of the municipality, which is or are actively engaged in the service of the municipality and duly recognized by the governing body of the municipality.

Furthermore, prudent business practices dictate that upon receipt of its state aid allocation, the relief association should establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the funds are deposited in a timely manner.

Cause: The relief association failed to establish internal control procedures which require that all income received be recorded and deposited in a timely manner. Relief association management indicated that the check was misplaced.

Effect: As a result of the untimely deposit, funds were not available to pay general operating expenses or for investment purposes. In addition, an untimely deposit of receipts increases the risk that funds could be lost or misappropriated.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association officials adopt internal control procedures to ensure the timely deposit of all income received. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued):

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.

Finding No. 2 – Inappropriate Ownership Of Rescue Vehicle

Condition: On March 13, 2009, the relief association purchased a rescue vehicle, in the amount of \$4,500, to carry personnel and safeguard equipment; however, the title to the vehicle was inappropriately issued in the name of the fire company.

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

Cause: The relief association failed to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure that the rescue vehicle purchased was titled in the name of the relief association.

Effect: As a result of the rescue vehicle being inappropriately titled in the name of the fire company, this relief association asset was not properly safeguarded.

Recommendation: We recommend the rescue vehicle be titled in the name of 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.

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

CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 3 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain
A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster**

Condition: As cited in the prior audit report, the relief association officials 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, it was incomplete and did not accurately identify all of the equipment owned by the relief association. The listing did not include names of suppliers (vendors), dates of purchase or cost of equipment. As such, it was impossible to determine if all equipment purchased during the audit period amounting to \$28,348 was recorded. In addition, there was no indication that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis, to account for all of the relief association's owned equipment.

Criteria: 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 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; and
- Evidence of the performance and results of an annual physical inventory.

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our three previous audits, relief association officials again, failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over equipment requiring the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster and the performance of an annual physical inventory of equipment.

Effect: 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.

CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 3 - (Continued)

Recommendation: We again recommend the relief association officials maintain a cumulative equipment roster of all relief association owned equipment. 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.

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. Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

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 | \$ 386 |
| Fire Services: | |
| Equipment purchased | \$ 28,348 |
| Equipment maintenance | 15,687 |
| Training expenses | 2,318 |
| Fire prevention materials | 2,683 |
| Total Fire Services | \$ 49,036 |
| Administrative Services: | |
| Other administrative expenses | \$ 39 |
| Total Investments Purchased | \$ 25,000 |
| Other Expenditures: | |
| Principal payments on loan | \$ 33,378 |
| Interest payments on loan | 6,507 |
| Total Other Expenditures | \$ 39,885 |

CENTRE HALL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Centre Hall Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Mr. Jackie Muthersbaugh, Jr. | President |
| Mr. Monty Strouse | Vice President |
| Mr. Forrest Rishel | Secretary |
| Mr. Jackie Muthersbaugh, Sr. | Treasurer |

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

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Ms. Beth Ann Araujo Centre Hall Borough | Secretary |
| Ms. Brenda Burd Potter Township | Secretary |

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at 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.