



**HOPWOOD VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
HOPWOOD PENNSYLVANIA**

FAYETTE COUNTY

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 1, 2008 TO DECEMBER 31, 2010



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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 Hopwood Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of Hopwood Pennsylvania, herein referred to as Hopwood 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 Hopwood Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

| <u>Municipality</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>2008</u> | <u>2009</u> | <u>2010</u> |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| South Union Township | Fayette | \$39,372 | \$34,458 | \$38,785 |

BACKGROUND (Continued)

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

Hopwood Volunteer Fire Department

Mr. Robert Doyle, President
HOPWOOD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Fayette County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Hopwood 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, 2008 to December 31, 2010.

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 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 Hopwood 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 Hopwood Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Hopwood Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2010, 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, 2008 to December 31, 2010, found the Hopwood Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report and, in all significant respects, received and expended state aid and accumulated relief funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures, except as noted in the finding listed below and discussed later in this report. The results of our tests also indicated the Hopwood Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2010, had a cash balance of \$11,629 and no investments.

Finding – Unauthorized Expenditures

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

April 18, 2011

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

HOPWOOD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hopwood Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has complied with the following prior audit findings and recommendations:

- Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

By maintaining a roster of relief association owned equipment.

- Inadequate Officer's Bond Coverage

By obtaining a bond policy solely in the relief association's name.

HOPWOOD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Unauthorized Expenditures

Condition: The relief association expended funds for the following items that are not authorized by Act 118:

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Check No.</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|--------------|------------------|---|------------------------|
| 09/10/08 | 1441 | Service and repair on fire department owned vehicle | \$ 1,632 |
| 10/22/08 | 1447 | Service and repair on fire department owned vehicle | 2,889 |
| Total | | | <u>\$ 4,521</u> |

While equipment repair costs are considered authorized by Act 118, allowable expenses are limited to equipment owned by the relief association. Here, the repair expenses were related to a vehicle that was not owned by the relief association.

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

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

- (11) To purchase safeguards for preserving life, health and safety of volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the volunteer fire service.

Because the Department of the Auditor General is legislatively prohibited from giving pre-audit advice, an interagency agreement with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has been established whereby the DCED provides interpretation of Act 118. Costs associated with service and repair to a fire department owned vehicle has been deemed by DCED to not qualify as authorized expenditures since the equipment is not owned by the relief association. These disbursements are not authorized under Act 118.

Cause: Relief association officials were unaware that the aforementioned expenditures were not authorized by Act 118.

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

HOPWOOD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

However, subsequent to the audit period, on March 9, 2011, the relief association received reimbursement, in the amount of \$4,521, from the affiliated fire department, for the unauthorized expenditures listed in the condition section of this finding.

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.

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.

HOPWOOD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2008 TO DECEMBER 31, 2010

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 | \$ 16,233 |
| Total Benefit Services | \$ 16,233 |
| | |
| Fire Services: | |
| Equipment purchased | \$ 35,908 |
| Equipment maintenance | 14,745 |
| Training expenses | 576 |
| Total Fire Services | \$ 51,229 |
| | |
| Administrative Services: | |
| Miscellaneous administrative expenses | 447 |
| Total Administrative Services | \$ 447 |
| | |
| Other Expenditures: | |
| Principal payments on lease-financing | \$ 66,212 |
| Interest payments on lease-financing | 18,517 |
| Total Other Expenditures | \$ 84,729 |

HOPWOOD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Hopwood Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Robert Doyle, President

Mr. William Lange, Vice President

Mr. Robert Bowlan, Secretary

Mr. Timothy W. Breakiron, Treasurer

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

Mr. Rick Vernon, Secretary
South Union Township

This report is a matter of public record. Copies of this report may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 318 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. If you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter, you may contact the Department of the Auditor General by accessing our website at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us.