



**WASHINGTONVILLE FIREFIGHTER'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**HEREIN REFERRED TO AS:**

**WASHINGTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**MONTOUR COUNTY**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**FOR THE PERIOD**

**JANUARY 1, 2007 TO DECEMBER 31, 2008**



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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, Act of June 11, 1968, (P.L. 149, No. 84), as amended, 53 P.S. § 8501 et seq. (commonly referred to as Act 84), 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 Washingtonville 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 84 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 84 authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by Act 84, 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 Washingtonville Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Madison Township	Columbia	\$2,617	\$2,688
Anthony Township	Montour	\$3,530	\$3,605
Derry Township	Montour	\$8,897	\$9,151
Limestone Township	Montour	\$3,282	\$3,441
Washingtonville Borough	Montour	\$ 965	\$ 988
West Hemlock Township	Montour	\$,1072	\$1,115

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

Washingtonville Volunteer Fire Company

Mr. Harold McMichaels, President  
WASHINGTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Montour County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Washingtonville 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, Act of June 11, 1968, (P.L. 149, No. 84), as amended, 53 P.S. § 8501 et seq. (commonly referred to as Act 84), for the period January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008.

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 objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objective.

The objective of the audit was 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 objective identified above.

Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Washingtonville Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's administration of state aid and accumulated 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 objective, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented.

Our audit procedures also included tests of documentary evidence supporting the Washingtonville Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Washingtonville Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2008, with the custodians of the funds, debtors, creditors, and financial institutions to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. 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 objective.

The results of our audit for the period January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008, found, in all significant respects, the Washingtonville Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association received and expended funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures, except as noted in the following finding discussed later in this report. The results of our tests indicated the Washingtonville Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the accompanying information and as of December 31, 2008, had a cash balance of \$26,660 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$5,000.

#### Finding – Inappropriate Presigning of Blank Checks

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

October 6, 2009

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General



WASHINGTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Inappropriate Presigning of Blank Checks

Condition: A review of the relief association's checkbook at the time of the audit engagement revealed that three blank checks were presigned by one of the two relief association officials who are authorized to sign checks. The presigning of blank checks negates the relief association's internal control over the disbursement process.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association have sufficient internal control procedures in place to prohibit the presigning of blank checks. Good 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 officials should compare this information with supporting documentation, such as invoices, contracts, etc., prior to approving the checks.

Cause: The relief association's officers were aware of the necessity for two signatures but did not realize that applying the second signature prior to evaluating the propriety of the expenditure negated the relief association's internal controls over the disbursement process.

Effect: As a result of the relief association officer presigning the blank checks, assets may have been placed at greater risk of expenditures being made without a second relief association officer having an opportunity to verify the propriety of the expenditure. The application of the second signature prior to evaluating the propriety of the expenditure increases the risk of errors occurring and going undetected, and increases the risk of misappropriation.

Recommendation: We recommend that the practice of presigning blank checks be immediately discontinued. We also recommend that all relief association officers ensure that checks are signed and cosigned only after the propriety of the expenditure has been determined and the payee, date, and amount to be paid has been confirmed. 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.

WASHINGTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2007 TO DECEMBER 31, 2008

Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8502(1) states, in part, that:

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. Such an association may also serve other purposes, . . . provided only that adequate provisions be first made to serve its primary purpose. . . .

Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8506, 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. 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	\$ 4,194
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	32
Total Benefit Services	\$ 4,226
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 31,946
Equipment maintenance	1,943
Training expenses	1,061
Total Fire Services	\$ 34,950
Administrative Services:	
Miscellaneous administrative expenses	\$ 126
Total Administrative Services	\$ 126

WASHINGTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Washingtonville Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Harold McMichaels, President

Mr. Scott Minnick, Vice President

Ms. Mary Cromis, Secretary

Ms. Alice Diehl, Treasurer

Reports were also distributed to each municipality, which allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association.

Ms. Peggy Long, Secretary  
Madison Township

Ms. Penny Jo Rishel, Secretary  
Anthony Township

Ms. Vicki E. Koser, Secretary  
Derry Township

Ms. Alice Laidacker, Secretary  
Limestone Township

Ms. Suzanne Hendershot, Secretary  
Washingtonville Borough

Ms. Anna Kissinger, Secretary  
West Hemlock 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](http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us).