



**THE CATAWISSA FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF CATAWISSA,  
PENNSYLVANIA**

**HEREIN REFERRED TO AS:**

**CATAWISSA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION**

**COLUMBIA COUNTY**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

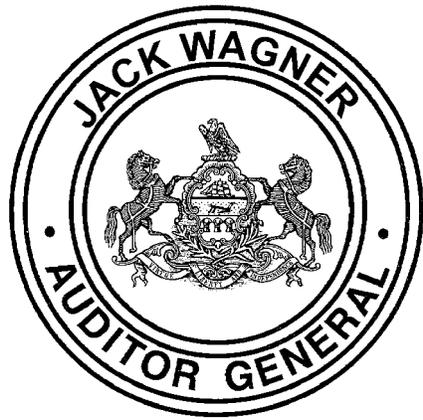
**FOR THE PERIOD**

**JANUARY 1, 2004 TO DECEMBER 31, 2006**



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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 Catawissa 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. The Catawissa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
Catawissa Borough	Columbia	\$7,057	\$7,783	\$7,850
Catawissa Township	Columbia	\$5,086	\$5,753	\$5,798
Franklin Township	Columbia	\$3,356	\$3,756	\$3,779

BACKGROUND (Continued)

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

Catawissa Hose Company No. 1

Mr. Harold D. Kitchen, President  
CATAWISSA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'  
RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Columbia County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Catawissa 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, 2004 to December 31, 2006. The audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* applicable to performance audits, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

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.

The Department of the Auditor General (Department) is mandated by state statute to calculate Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Catawissa 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 applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures significant within the context of the audit objective. We also tested transactions, confirmed the Catawissa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash balance as of December 31, 2006, with the custodians of the funds, and interviewed selected officials to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective.

The results of our audit found that for the period January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2006, the Catawissa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the accompanying information and as of December 31, 2006, had a cash balance of \$16,855 and no investments. Additionally, the results of our tests indicated that, in all significant respects, the Catawissa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association received and expended state aid and accumulated relief association funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures, except as noted in the following finding discussed later in this report:

Finding – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

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

December 12, 2007

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General

CATAWISSA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Failure to Maintain Minutes of Meetings

Condition: The relief association did not maintain minutes of meetings regarding association business. Specifically, the relief association meetings were conducted in conjunction with the fire company meetings and, thus, separate minutes pertaining to the association's financial-related business were not maintained, as required by Act 84.

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505(a) states, in part, that the relief association:

. . . must provide for the taking and preserving of minutes of all meetings, and the maintenance of such books of account as may be necessary and appropriate to afford a permanent record of its financial affairs.

Cause: Relief association officials were unaware that maintaining separate minutes of meetings was required by Act 84.

Effect: The failure to maintain separate minutes of meetings prevented the verification as to whether relief association business was presented before the membership for approval.

Recommendation: We recommend relief association officials conduct separate meetings and maintain a permanent record of all relief association business discussed at the meetings, as required by Act 84. The minutes should include an adequate record of all financial-related business conducted solely 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.

CATAWISSA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2004 TO DECEMBER 31, 2006

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	\$ 3,316
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	478
Total Benefit Services	\$ 3,794
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 34,017
Equipment maintenance	12,013
Training expenses	1,636
Fire prevention materials	802
Total Fire Services	\$ 48,468
Administrative Services:	
Miscellaneous administrative expenses	\$ 923
Total Administrative Services	\$ 923

CATAWISSA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Catawissa Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Officers:

Mr. Harold D. Kitchen, President

Mr. Robert Marut, Secretary

Mr. Donald G. Traugh, Treasurer

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

Ms. Janet A. Erb, Secretary  
Catawissa Borough

Ms. Melissa Weber, Secretary  
Catawissa Township

Mr. Richard Fetterman, Secretary  
Franklin 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).