



**THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF NORTH  
COVENTRY TOWNSHIP**

**HEREIN REFERRED TO AS:**

**NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF  
ASSOCIATION**

**CHESTER COUNTY**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**FOR THE PERIOD**

**JANUARY 1, 2006 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 North Coventry Township 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 North Coventry Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
North Coventry Township	Chester	\$60,694	\$63,279	\$67,058
Warwick Township	Chester	\$ 2,323	\$ 2,348	\$ 2,417

BACKGROUND (Continued)

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

North Coventry Fire Company

Mr. Pennya F. Comtois, President  
NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER  
FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
Chester County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the North Coventry Township 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, 2006 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 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 North Coventry Township 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 objectives, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented. Our audit procedures also included tests of documentary evidence supporting the North Coventry Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the North Coventry Township 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 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, 2006 to December 31, 2008, found, in all significant respects, the North Coventry Township 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 findings discussed later in this report. The results of our tests indicated the North Coventry Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the accompanying information and as of December 31, 2008, had a cash balance of \$184,584 and no investments.

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure to Maintain a Federal Tax Identification Number

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

February 17, 2009

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General



NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The North Coventry Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has not complied with the prior audit findings. These issues are further discussed in the following findings noted in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws
  
- Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure to Maintain a Federal Tax Identification Number

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.

NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws

Condition: As cited in the prior audit report, the existing bylaws of the North Coventry Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association do not contain all of the provisions required by Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505(c). Specifically, the bylaws do not require the signatures of at least two officers, one of which shall be the disbursing officer's, in order to bind the relief association by formal contract or to issue any negotiable instruments.

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8505(c) states, in part, that the relief association's bylaws shall include the following provision:

- Require the signatures of at least two officers, one of which shall be the disbursing officer, in order to bind the relief association by formal contract or to issue any negotiable instrument.

Cause: While notified of this condition in the prior audit report, relief association officials neglected to amend the relief association bylaws to meet the bylaw provisions required by Act 84.

Effect: The relief association's bylaws in their current form are not in compliance with the requirements of Act 84. Although all checks reviewed that were drawn during the current financial period did contain the signature of the treasurer, we believe the Act 84 stipulation requiring the treasurer's signature should be contained within the relief association's bylaws so that the relief association membership is aware of proper operating procedures.

Recommendation: We again recommend that relief association officials review and update the bylaws governing their organization so that the bylaws meet the requirements set forth in Act 84 and properly authorize the operating procedures 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.

NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –  
Failure to Maintain a Federal Tax Identification Number

Condition: As cited in the prior audit report, the volunteer firefighters' relief association failed to comply with the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act by not maintaining a federal tax identification number. The relief association is currently using an inactive federal tax identification number.

Criteria: All businesses, both profit and nonprofit, are required to obtain a federal tax identification number and provide this number to any financial institution where funds are earning interest. If their tax identification number is not provided, the financial institution is required to withhold 31 percent of interest earned and transmit these funds to the Internal Revenue Service, representing federal income taxes.

Cause: While notified of this condition in the prior audit report, the relief association neglected to obtain its own federal tax identification number.

Effect: Failure to comply with the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act could cause the relief association to be penalized by the Internal Revenue Service, resulting in the loss of funds otherwise available for general operating expenditures or for investment purposes.

Recommendation: We again recommend the relief association immediately apply for its own federal tax identification number through the Internal Revenue Service and furnish this number to its financial institutions. The relief association should also consider applying to the Internal Revenue Service for tax exempt status as a nonprofit corporation under Internal Revenue Code 501(c). 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.

NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2006 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	\$ 16,786
Total Benefit Services	\$ 16,786
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 90,608
Equipment maintenance	30,851
Training expenses	7,544
Fire prevention materials	1,163
Total Fire Services	\$ 130,166
Administrative Services:	
Miscellaneous administrative expenses	\$ 2,826
Total Administrative Services	\$ 2,826

NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

North Coventry Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Pennya F. Comtois, President

Mr. Barry G. Boettlin, Vice President

Ms. Tammy Longacre, Secretary

Mr. Douglas R. Keim, Treasurer

Mr. Sean P. Kane, Assistant Treasurer

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

Mr. Kevin F. Hennessey, Secretary  
North Coventry Township

Ms. Joan Grimley, Secretary  
Warwick 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).