



**FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF PLUMSTEAD TOWNSHIP, OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

HEREIN REFERRED TO AS:

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION

BUCKS COUNTY

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 1, 2005 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 Plumstead 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 Plumstead Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
Bedminster Township	Bucks	\$ 16,952	\$ 17,230
Plumstead Township	Bucks	\$121,012	\$122,126
Solebury Township	Bucks	\$ 25,168	\$ 25,930
Tinicum Township	Bucks	\$ 517	\$ 524

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

Point Pleasant Fire Company
Plumsteadville Fire Company
Point Pleasant-Plumsteadville Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Stephen Oiler, President
PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Bucks County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Plumstead 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, 2005 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.

Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Plumstead 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 Plumstead Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's investment balance and the 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 for the period January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2006, found, in all significant respects, the Plumstead 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 Plumstead Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the accompanying information and as of December 31, 2006, had a cash balance of \$20,728 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$695,510.

Finding No. 1 – Undocumented Loan

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Minutes of Meetings

Finding No. 3 – Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

We also noted another matter that has been included in the following observation discussed later in this report.

Observation – Diversification of Investments

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

December 14, 2007

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Undocumented Loan

Condition: On July 11, 2005, the relief association made a loan to the Point Pleasant-Plumsteadville Emergency Medical Services (EMS) unit, in the amount of \$12,964, without a formal written loan agreement.

Criteria: Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8506(c)(3) states, in part:

All, or any part of the funds of any volunteer firefighters' relief association may be invested:

In any obligation of an incorporated fire company which obligation is secured by assets of the [fire] company having capital value equal to at least one hundred fifty percent of the amount of the obligation at the time it is made, and is subject to provisions which will amortize such loan at a rate ensuring that the depreciated value of the assets pledged shall continue to be at least equal to one hundred fifty percent of the balance remaining due.

In addition, good business practice requires such terms of the obligation be placed into a written loan agreement.

Cause: Relief association officials were unaware that the loan to the fire company must be documented to ensure compliance with Act 84 provisions.

Effect: Failure to adequately document the loan through a formal written agreement places the investment at greater risk.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association and EMS unit prepare a formal written loan agreement, signed by both parties, specifying the payment schedule and the interest rate. The loan agreement must also specifically identify the collateral to protect the investment as required by Act 84 at 53 P.S. § 8506(c)(3). If such action is not taken, we recommend that the loan be immediately liquidated. 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.

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Minutes of Meetings

Condition: The relief association failed to maintain detailed minutes of meetings, as required by Act 84. Specifically, the relief association's minutes did not address all of the financial-related transactions, which occurred during the period under review.

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 detailed minutes of meetings was required by Act 84.

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

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association maintain detailed minutes of meetings, including all financial-related business conducted 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.

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 3 – Failure to Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

Condition: The relief association officials did not maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. During the current audit, the relief association provided two separate rosters of equipment owned by the relief association and located at two of the three affiliated fire service organizations. These separate rosters were compiled by each respective affiliated fire service organization rather than the relief association. The relief association did not provide an equipment roster of equipment located at the third affiliated fire service organization. Some of the equipment purchased by the relief association during the current financial period was not recorded on any of the equipment rosters provided. While it is not necessary for each of the fire service organizations and the relief association to maintain separate records, it is the relief association's responsibility to have sufficient records to be able to determine that all equipment purchased has been recorded and accounted for. Furthermore, only one of the equipment rosters provided contained evidence that the relief association had performed an annual inventory of its equipment to account for the relief association's fixed assets.

Criteria: 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 fixed assets. A cumulative roster of all relief association equipment should include the following:

- Type of equipment purchased.
- Date of purchase.
- Unit cost.
- Name of supplier.
- Serial number, if applicable.
- Current location of item.
- Final disposition of sold or damaged equipment.
- Notation of the annual inventory.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over fixed assets to include the maintenance of a cumulative and comprehensive equipment roster and the performance of an annual equipment inventory.

Effect: The 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 conduct an annual equipment inventory prevents adequate accountability and safeguarding of relief association assets.

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 3 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association officials maintain a cumulative roster of all relief association owned equipment. Furthermore, the relief association should ensure it performs an annual inventory of all operable equipment and that 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.

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION OBSERVATION

Observation – Diversification of Investments

Within the parameters established by the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act¹, it is the responsibility of the volunteer firefighters' relief association to invest its funds in a proper and prudent manner.

As these investments typically provide an income stream to the relief association for annual operations, it is generally sensible not to invest all VFRA money in one asset or asset class that places the principal at risk. In fact, state law requires VFRA's to "reasonably diversify investments, unless the [VFRA] reasonably determines that it is in the interest of the beneficiaries not to diversify..."².

By diversifying investments, the VFRA can help preserve capital, increase liquidity and decrease volatility. Diversification means spreading one's money among different investments; asset allocation diversifies total investments among different investment classes, such as stocks, bonds, government securities, and cash equivalents.

As of December 31, 2006, the VFRA had \$695,510 (fair value) or 97% of the VFRA's cash and investments in stocks and mutual funds.

The VFRA management should periodically review its specific cash needs and investment goals and ensure that its investments are allocated and diversified to prudently meet those needs and goals.

¹ 53 P.S. § 8506(c)(1997). This provision incorporates the "prudent investor rule" of the Probate, Estates, and Fiduciaries Code, 20 Pa. C.S.A. §7201 et seq.

² 20 Pa. C.S.A. § 7204(a) (Supp. 2005).

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2005 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	\$ 31,027
Relief benefits	1,553
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 32,580</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 126,098
Equipment maintenance	11,750
Training expenses	8,213
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 146,061</u>
Administrative Services:	
Officer compensation	\$ 550
Other administrative expenses	23,901
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 24,451</u>
Total Investments Purchased	<u>\$ 729,486</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Principal payments on loan	\$ 3,916
Interest payments on loan	1,092
Total Other Expenditures	<u>\$ 5,008</u>

PLUMSTEAD VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Plumstead Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Officers:

Mr. Stephen Oiler, President

Mr. Joseph D. Kulp, Secretary

Mr. Robert Schmell, Treasurer

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

Ms. Jean L. Herstine, Secretary
Bedminster Township

Mr. Vince Formica, Secretary
Plumstead Township

Ms. Gretchen K. Rice, Secretary
Solebury Township

Ms. Linda McNeill, Secretary
Tinicum 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.