



Pennsylvania Department of the

AUDITOR GENERAL

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News for Immediate Release

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Auditor General DePasquale's Review Finds Nearly \$315,000 Missing from Lehigh Twp. VFRA; Results in Over 300 Charges Being Filed

Audit team aided law enforcement investigation in Northampton County

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today commented on theft, forgery and other charges filed against the former treasurer of the Lehigh Township Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association in Northampton County related to \$314,933.94 in missing funds. The relief association is legally separate from the township's volunteer fire company, but provides support.

"I applaud the Lehigh Township VFRA's leadership for bringing the alleged theft to my attention last summer," DePasquale said. "My office worked with local law enforcement to help the investigation. Last week my team provided the local police department with a report outlining 377 instances of alleged theft amounting to nearly \$315,000 in funds missing between 2011 and 2018."

Total Alleged Misappropriation During the Period January 1, 2011 Through July 31, 2018	
	Amount
Checks written to pay fictitious vendor invoices	\$ 19,878.73
Checks written to the former treasurer	\$ 211,730.00
Debit card expenditures	\$ 73,745.21
Checks written by the former treasurer to vendors for non-relief association purposes	\$ 9,580.00
Total Alleged Misappropriation of Funds:	\$ 314,933.94

In December, DePasquale took the unprecedented step of withdrawing past audits of the support organization and ordering a new review to be performed. The revised audit will be released in the near future.

"The association's current leadership has been very cooperative in our efforts to account for the tax dollars it has received," DePasquale added.

The Department of the Auditor General audits volunteer firefighters' relief associations, which receive state aid from a 2 percent state tax on fire insurance premiums purchased by Pennsylvania residents from out-of-state casualty insurance companies.

In 2018, 2,518 municipalities received \$55.1 million in state aid for distribution to local volunteer firefighters' relief associations to provide training, purchase equipment and insurance, and pay for death benefits for volunteer firefighters.

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