COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Franklin Township Firemen's Relief Association

Carbon County, Pennsylvania

For the Period
January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024

July 2026

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0018
Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General
Twitter: @PAAuditorGen
www.PaAuditor.gov

TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Lynn Diehl, President
Franklin Township Firemen's Relief
Association
Carbon County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Franklin Township Firemen's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 72 P.S. § 403; and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"), see 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418.

The objective of the audit was to determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above and was not, nor was it required to be, conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the relief association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief association funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures, including the safeguarding of assets. Relief association officers are responsible for complying with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024, the relief association, in all significant respects, complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds, except as noted in the finding listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding – Failure To Update Relief Association Bylaws

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association and, where appropriate, their response has been included in the report. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

Timothy L. DeFoor

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
April 13, 2026

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,[1] Section 403 of The Fiscal Code,[2] and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"),[3] 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, commonly referred to as Act 205,[4] are properly expended.

The 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.

The VFRA Act governs the overall operation of volunteer firefighters' relief associations. Relief association bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which relief associations conduct business. To fulfill its primary purpose, the VFRA Act authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by the VFRA Act, it is the responsibility of relief associations to choose investments in a proper and prudent manner.

Volunteer firefighters' relief associations receive public tax monies, and the relief association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the relief association's financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all relief association transactions. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the relief 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 that is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality.

[1] Pa. Const. Art. VIII § 10.
[2] 72 P.S. § 403.
[3] 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq*.
[4] 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.*

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

The relief association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

Municipality	County	2023	2024
Franklin Township	Carbon	$26,027	$26,382

As of December 31, 2024, based on the relief association's records, its total cash was $65,291.

Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024, were $52,658, as noted below. The accuracy of these expenditures was evaluated as part of the Department's audit to conclude on the relief association's compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.[5] **The scope of the Department's audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of these amounts.**

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:		
Insurance premiums	$	18,180
Fire Services:		
Equipment purchased	$	19,847
Equipment maintenance		7,400
Training expenses		6,731
Total Fire Services	$	33,978
Administrative Services:		
Bond premiums	$	500
Total Expenditures	$	52,658

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

Franklin Township Volunteer Fire Company

[5] Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Failure To Update Relief Association Bylaws

Condition: In the prior audit period, a verbal observation was communicated to the relief association noting that the existing bylaws contained outdated language related to conducting business based on Act 84 of June 11, 1968, rather than the VFRA Act. No corrective action was taken in regard to this matter in the current audit period.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should update its bylaws to ensure that the relief association conducts its affairs in compliance with the VFRA Act.

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware of the changes to the mandatory bylaw provisions established by the VFRA Act.

Effect: As a result of the relief association not updating its bylaws, the relief association may not have conducted its affairs in compliance with the VFRA Act.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials review and update the bylaws governing its organization and establish guidelines to ensure it conducts its affairs in compliance with the VFRA Act. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management 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.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification during the next audit.

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Franklin Township Firemen's Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Lynn Diehl
President

Mr. Justin Smith
Vice President

Mr. Thomas Chew
Secretary

Mr. Eric Lilly
Treasurer

A report was also distributed to the following municipality, which allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association:

Ms. Cady Guy
Secretary
Franklin Township

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.