

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Pine Township, Mercer County, Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association

Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023

September 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Larry Stewart, President
Pine Township, Mercer County, Volunteer
Fireman's Relief Association
Mercer County

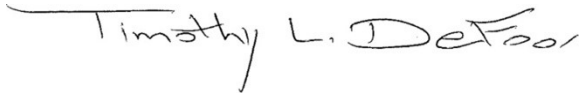
We have conducted a compliance audit of the Pine Township, Mercer County, Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth 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, 2022, to December 31, 2023, 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.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
August 27, 2024

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code¹, and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act² ("VFRA Act"), 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 Law³ (commonly referred to as Act 205) 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 72 P.S. § 403 (as last amended by Act 44 of 2017).

² 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.* See specifically, 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418 (amended by Act 91 of 2020).

³ 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (Act 205 of 1984, as amended by Act 119 of 1990).

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Liberty Township	Mercer	\$ 1,146	\$ 1,159*
Pine Township	Mercer	\$28,995	\$29,201
Wolf Creek Township	Mercer	\$ 4,247	\$ 4,333

* Although Liberty Township prepared and returned a Certification Form AG 385 for 2023 by the March 31 annual filing date in accordance with Act 205, the township did not distribute the 2023 state aid to the relief association in a timely manner. The foreign fire insurance tax allocation was distributed to the municipal treasurer on September 21, 2023, who forwarded this state aid to the affiliated fire company instead of the relief association on October 19, 2023. Although the distribution was within 60 days of receipt, as required by Section 706 (b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), the state aid allocation was sent to the incorrect entity and not to the relief association. The affiliated fire company erroneously deposited the state aid allocation. As a result of our audit, on May 14, 2024, the relief association received a check from the affiliated fire company and the \$1,159 was deposited into the relief association’s account on May 15, 2024.

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash as of December 31, 2023, was \$59,434, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 59,434
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BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023, were \$54,330, 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.⁴ **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	\$	6,433
Relief benefits		308
Total Benefit Services	\$	<u>6,741</u>

Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$	7,167
Equipment maintenance		23,689
Training expenses		16,466
Total Fire Services	\$	<u>47,322</u>

Administrative Services:

Bond premiums	\$	205
Other administrative expenses		62
Total Administrative Services	\$	<u>267</u>

Total Expenditures	\$	<u>54,330</u>
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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:

Pine Township Engine Company

⁴ Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

PINE TOWNSHIP, MERCER COUNTY, VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Pine Township, Mercer County, Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Larry Stewart
President

Ms. Mandy Geary
Vice President

Mr. Juan Faunce
Secretary

Mr. Richard Weinzierl
Treasurer

The following municipalities allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association and received a copy of this report:

Ms. Brenda J. Heck
Secretary
Liberty Township

Ms. Jeanine Thompson
Secretary
Pine Township

Ms. Lorey North
Secretary
Wolf Creek Township

PINE TOWNSHIP, MERCER COUNTY, VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
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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.