

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Relief Fund Association of the Raccoon Township Independent Volunteer Fire Department No. 1 of the County of Beaver, State of Pennsylvania

For the Period
January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023

January 2025



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. Jerry McElhaney, President
Relief Fund Association of the Raccoon
Township Independent Volunteer Fire
Department No. 1 of the County of
Beaver, State of Pennsylvania

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Relief Fund Association of the Raccoon Township Independent Volunteer Fire Department No. 1 of the County of Beaver, State of Pennsylvania (relief association) for the period January 1, 2021, 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 objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report.
2. 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 objectives 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 objectives. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

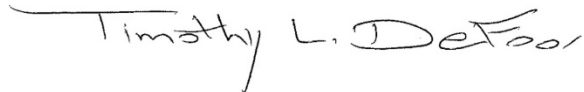
We were not able to obtain an independent confirmation of the investment balance directly from the financial institution. Therefore, while the relief association provided copies of investment statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2023, the relief association had an investment balance with a fair value of \$173,750, we were not able to verify this investment balance.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, except for the effects, if any, of the matter described in the preceding paragraph, for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report.
- 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 – Unauthorized Expenditure

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
Auditor General
December 6, 2024

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Background	1
Status of Prior Finding	4
Finding and Recommendation:	
Finding – Unauthorized Expenditure	5
Report Distribution List	7

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.

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Raccoon Township	Beaver	\$13,859	\$16,084	\$16,097

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)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2023, were \$193,322, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 19,572
Fair Value of Investments	<u>173,750</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u>\$ 193,322</u>

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023, were \$60,109, 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	<u>\$ 8,897</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 40,625
Equipment maintenance	9,209
Training expenses	<u>410</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 50,244</u>
Administrative Services:	
Bond premiums	\$ 410
Other administrative expenses	<u>70</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 480</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Unauthorized expenditure – See Finding	<u>\$ 488</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>\$ 60,109</u>

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

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

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:

Raccoon Township Independent Volunteer Fire Department No. 1

RELIEF FUND ASSOCIATION OF THE RACCOON TOWNSHIP INDEPENDENT
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 1 OF THE COUNTY OF BEAVER,
STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The relief association has complied with the prior audit finding and recommendation, as follows:

- Inappropriate Presigning Of Blank Checks

By prohibiting the presigning of blank checks.

RELIEF FUND ASSOCIATION OF THE RACCOON TOWNSHIP INDEPENDENT
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 1 OF THE COUNTY OF BEAVER,
STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Unauthorized Expenditure

Condition: The relief association expended \$488 for the repair of affiliated fire department owned equipment during the current audit period that is not authorized by the VFRA Act.

Criteria: Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act states:

The funds of any volunteer firefighters' relief association may be spent:

- (1) To pay for such normal and reasonable running expenses as may be appropriate to the businesslike conduct of the affairs of the association, including legal fees, rental or purchase of offices, payment of reasonable compensation of employees and purchase of office equipment and supplies.
- (11) To purchase safeguards for preserving life, health and safety of volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the volunteer fire service, including necessary training.

In addition, Section 7418(b) of the VFRA Act states:

- (b) Findings -- If the Auditor General finds that money received by a volunteer firefighters' relief association has been expended for a purpose other than one authorized by this subchapter, the commissioner, upon receiving notice of the finding from the auditor general, shall decline to approve payment to the volunteer firefighters' relief association until the improperly expended amount has been reimbursed to the relief association fund.

Costs associated with repairs to affiliated fire department owned equipment do not qualify as authorized volunteer firefighters' relief association expenditures; consequently, this disbursement is not authorized under the VFRA Act.

Cause: The relief association officials indicated that they were unaware that the aforementioned expenditure was not authorized by the VFRA Act.

Effect: As a result of this improper expenditure, relief association funds were not available for investment purposes, or to pay for expenditures authorized by the VFRA Act.

RELIEF FUND ASSOCIATION OF THE RACCOON TOWNSHIP INDEPENDENT
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 1 OF THE COUNTY OF BEAVER,
STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$488 for the unauthorized expenditure and that relief association officials become familiar with Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act to aid them in determining the propriety of future expenditures. 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, as a result of our audit, the affiliated fire company reimbursed the relief association \$488 for the unauthorized expenditure on November 1, 2024.

Auditor’s Conclusion: We reviewed documentation verifying that the reimbursement of \$488 was received. Compliance for expenditures made during the next audit period will be subject to verification through our next audit.

RELIEF FUND ASSOCIATION OF THE RACCOON TOWNSHIP INDEPENDENT
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 1 OF THE COUNTY OF BEAVER,
STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Relief Fund Association of the Raccoon Township Independent Volunteer Fire Department
No. 1 of the County of Beaver, State of Pennsylvania Governing Body:

Mr. Jerry McElhaney
President

Mr. Sean Marshall
Treasurer

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

Ms. Christy M. Piatkowski
Secretary
Raccoon 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.