

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## The Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association of Freeport, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania

For the Period  
January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023

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January 2025



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Gary Risch, President  
The Volunteer Fireman's Relief  
Association of Freeport, Armstrong  
County, Pennsylvania

We have conducted a compliance audit of The Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association of Freeport, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania (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.

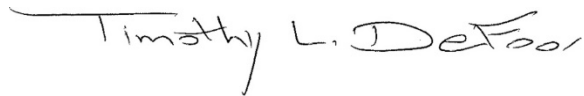
The objective of the audit was to determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds. Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective 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, except as noted in the finding listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding – Relief Association Checking And Investment Accounts  
Inappropriately Registered Under Affiliated Fire Service  
Organization’s Federal Tax Identification Number

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor  
Auditor General  
January 10, 2025

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## BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,<sup>1</sup> Section 403 of The Fiscal Code,<sup>2</sup> and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"),<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Pa. Const. Art. VIII § 10.

<sup>2</sup> 72 P.S. § 403.

<sup>3</sup> 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.*

**BACKGROUND – (Continued)**

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Freeport Borough	Armstrong	\$7,434	\$7,282

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2023, were \$78,282, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 29,516
Fair Value of Investments	<u>48,766</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u><u>\$ 78,282</u></u>

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023, were \$6,000, 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.<sup>5</sup> **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>\$ 4,131</u>
Fire Services:	
Training expenses	<u>\$ 1,197</u>
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	<u>\$ 672</u>
Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 6,000</u></u>

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<sup>5</sup> 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 organizations are separate, legal entities. The relief association is affiliated with the following fire service organizations:

Freeport EMS, Inc.

Freeport Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

THE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF FREEPORT,  
ARMSTRONG COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – Relief Association Checking And Investment Accounts Inappropriately Registered Under Affiliated Fire Service Organization's Federal Tax Identification Number**

Condition: As of December 31, 2023, the relief association held a checking and investment account, with a total balance of \$78,282 which were inappropriately registered under the fire company's federal tax identification number rather than the relief association's identification number. These checking and investment accounts represent 100 percent of the relief association's cash assets.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association maintain ownership of all financial accounts as a means of safeguarding its assets from unauthorized use or disposition.

Cause: The relief association officials did not provide a reason why this occurred.

Effect: As a result of the accounts being inappropriately registered under another entity's federal tax identification number, these relief association assets were not properly safeguarded.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials secure ownership rights to all monetary assets. This requirement can be accomplished by ensuring that all relief association financial accounts are registered under the relief association's federal tax identification number. 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, changed the federal tax identification number on their checking account at the financial institution on October 3, 2024. In addition, the relief association opened a new investment account using their federal tax identification number and transferred \$52,550 from the original investment account on October 4, 2024.

Auditor's Conclusion: We reviewed documentation showing that the federal tax identification number was changed on both accounts and \$52,550 was transferred to the new account. Continued compliance for having the proper federal tax identification number on all relief association accounts will be subject to verification through our next audit.



THE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF FREEPORT,  
ARMSTRONG COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

**The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro**  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association of Freeport, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania  
Governing Body:

**Mr. Gary Risch**  
President

**Mr. Richard Swartz**  
Vice President

**Ms. Breanna Walker**  
Secretary

**Mr. Jeff Lowers**  
Treasurer

**Mr. Eric Davis**  
Assistant Treasurer

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

**Ms. Mariah Jones**  
Secretary  
Freeport Borough

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://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](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov).