

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Westfield Firemen's Relief Association Tioga County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023

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August 2024



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. Michael James, President  
Westfield Firemen's Relief Association  
Tioga County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Westfield Firemen'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 objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings 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.

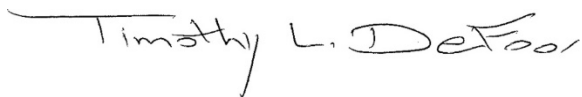
Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objectives identified above and was not, nor was it required to be, conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

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.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings 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.

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 long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor  
Auditor General  
July 30, 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 Code<sup>1</sup>, and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act<sup>2</sup> ("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 Law<sup>3</sup> (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.

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<sup>1</sup> 72 P.S. § 403 (as last amended by Act 44 of 2017).

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

<sup>3</sup> 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>
Hector Township	Potter	\$ 683	\$ 674
Brookfield Township	Tioga	\$2,363	\$2,292
Westfield Borough	Tioga	\$4,924	\$5,027
Westfield Township	Tioga	\$5,580	\$5,691

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash, and investments as of December 31, 2023, were \$150,537, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 9,024
Fair Value of Investments	<u>141,513</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u>\$ 150,537</u>

## BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023, were \$28,004, 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>4</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	\$	8,190
Death benefits		1,000
Relief benefits		<u>305</u>
Total Benefit Services	\$	<u>9,495</u>

#### Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$	14,438
Equipment maintenance		2,671
Training expenses		<u>1,234</u>
Total Fire Services	\$	<u>18,343</u>

#### Administrative Services:

Other administrative expenses	\$	<u>166</u>
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Total Expenditures	\$	<u><u>28,004</u></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:

Crary Hose Company

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

WESTFIELD FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relief association has complied with the prior audit findings and recommendations, as follows:

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Membership Roster

By maintaining a comprehensive listing of the relief association's membership.

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

By maintaining a cumulative inventory roster of all relief association owned equipment.

We commend the relief association management for its efforts in complying with the findings and recommendations contained in the prior audit report. The relief association management should strive to remain in compliance with all applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures.



WESTFIELD FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

Westfield Firemen's Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Michael James**  
President

**Mr. David Earle**  
Vice President

**Mr. Matthew Reed**  
Secretary

**Mr. Steven Brubaker**  
Treasurer

**Mr. Gary Bisel**  
Trustee

**Mr. Martin Heyler**  
Trustee

**Mr. Shawn Ianson**  
Trustee

WESTFIELD FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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

**Ms. Bonnie French**  
Secretary  
Hector Township

**Ms. Carolyn Good**  
Secretary  
Brookfield Township

**Ms. Lori A. Nelson**  
Secretary  
Westfield Borough

**Mr. Jeffrey Van Dusen**  
Secretary  
Westfield Township

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).