

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

---

## Youngsville Volunteer Fire Department Relief Association, Inc. Warren County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023

---

September 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. Vern Edmisten, President  
Youngsville Volunteer Fire Department  
Relief Association, Inc.  
Warren County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Youngsville Volunteer Fire Department Relief Association, Inc. (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 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.

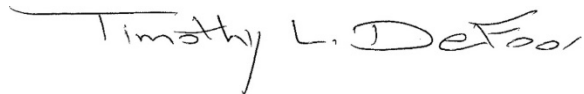
Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the relief association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief association funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative 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, 2021, to December 31, 2023:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address one of the two findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the one remaining finding contained in our prior audit report, as listed below, and discussed in the Status of Prior Findings section of this 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 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Unauthorized Expenditures

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  
September 9, 2024

# CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Background.....	1
Status of Prior Findings .....	4
Finding and Recommendation:	
Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Unauthorized Expenditures .....	5
Report Distribution List .....	7

## 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.

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Brokenstraw Township	Warren	\$7,506	\$8,658	\$8,612
Youngsville Borough	Warren	\$6,382	\$7,759	\$7,683

<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)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2023, were \$232,555, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 28,855
Fair Value of Investments	<u>203,700</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u>\$ 232,555</u>

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023, were \$86,469, 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	\$ 33,096
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	<u>648</u>
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 33,744</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 13,862
Equipment maintenance	20,384
Training expenses	<u>1,211</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 35,457</u>
Administrative Services:	
Bond premiums	\$ 400
Other administrative expenses	<u>61</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 461</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Unauthorized expenditures – See Finding	<u>\$ 16,807</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>\$ 86,469</u>

---

<sup>4</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 organization are separate, legal entities. The relief association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

Youngsville Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

YOUNGSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION, INC.  
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

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

- Payment Of Pennsylvania Sales Tax

By furnishing the state sales tax exemption number to all vendors from which the relief association purchases equipment.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The relief association has not complied with one of the two prior audit findings. This finding is noted below and discussed in detail in the Finding and Recommendation section of this report:

- Unauthorized Expenditure

Although the relief association received reimbursement of \$5,000 from the affiliated fire company for the unauthorized expenditure that was made in the prior audit period, the relief association again expended funds in the current audit period that were not authorized by the VFRA Act as further disclosed in the finding of this report.

We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding. The relief association management should strive to implement the recommendation and corrective action noted in this audit report.



YOUNGSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION, INC.  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Unauthorized Expenditures**

Condition: Although the relief association received reimbursement from the affiliated fire company for the unauthorized expenditure that was made in the prior audit period, the relief association again expended funds for the following items during the current audit period that are not authorized by the VFRA Act:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
05/04/2022	1395	Affiliated fire company’s commercial insurance premium	\$ 7,967
04/27/2023	1420	Affiliated fire company’s commercial insurance premium	8,840
Total			<u>\$ 16,807</u>

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 the affiliated fire company’s commercial insurance premiums do not qualify as authorized volunteer firefighters’ relief association expenditures; consequently, these disbursements are not authorized under the VFRA Act.

YOUNGSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION, INC.  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – (Continued)**

Cause: The relief association officials indicated that due to a change at the local borough office, the insurance was not paid, and the relief association was unaware that the expenditure for the insurance was not authorized by the VFRA Act.

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

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$16,807 for the unauthorized expenditures 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 \$16,807 for the unauthorized expenditures on June 24, 2024.

Auditor's Conclusion: We reviewed documentation verifying that the reimbursement of \$16,807 was received. Compliance for expenditures made during the next audit period will be subject to verification through our next audit.

YOUNGSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION, INC.  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

Youngsville Volunteer Fire Department Relief Association, Inc. Governing Body:

**Mr. Vern Edmisten**  
President

**Ms. April Peate**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Taryne Lewis**  
Secretary  
Brokenstraw Township

**Ms. Allie Benedict**  
Secretary  
Youngsville 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).