

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Allegheny Valley Volunteer Fire Company Relief Association of Harmar and Springdale Townships Allegheny County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020

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March 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Joseph Luera, President  
Allegheny Valley Volunteer Fire  
Company Relief Association of  
Harmar and Springdale Townships  
Allegheny County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Allegheny Valley Volunteer Fire Company Relief Association of Harmar and Springdale Townships (relief association) for the period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020. 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 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, 2017 to December 31, 2020, 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  
February 17, 2022

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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 association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the association's financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all association transactions. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the 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>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Harmar Township	Allegheny	\$23,851	\$22,141	\$24,032	\$24,127
Springdale Township*	Allegheny	\$ 8,125	\$ 7,390	\$ 8,099	\$ 8,174

\* Due to the late filing of the 2015 and 2016 Certification Forms AG 385, the 2015 and 2016 state aid allocations were not received and distributed to the relief association by Springdale Township in accordance with Act 205. Springdale Township failed to complete and return reporting Certification Form AG 385 for the years 2015 and 2016 by the March 31 annual filing date in accordance with Act 205 to ensure proper receipt and eventual distribution of state aid to the relief association. Although Springdale Township did file the 2015 and 2016 Certification Forms AG 385 in December of 2017, the relief association did not receive their foreign fire insurance premium tax state aid allocations, per Section 706(b)(2) of the Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205) until December 26, 2017. Upon receipt of the 2015 and 2016 state aid allocations, the relief association deposited the state aid allocations on January 4, 2018 into an appropriate relief association account.

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash as of December 31, 2020 was \$246,967, as illustrated below:

Cash	<u>\$ 246,967</u>
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## BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020 were \$397,271, 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	\$	16,797
Death benefits		17,500
Relief benefits		564
Total Benefit Services	\$	<u>34,861</u>

#### Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$	345,596
Equipment maintenance		8,948
Training expenses		2,350
Total Fire Services	\$	<u>356,894</u>

#### Administrative Services:

Other administrative expenses	\$	4,268
Bond premiums		1,248
Total Administrative Services	\$	<u>5,516</u>

Total Expenditures	\$	<u><u>397,271</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:

Allegheny Valley Volunteer Fire 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.

ALLEGHENY VALLEY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF  
HARMAR AND SPRINGDALE TOWNSHIPS  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

**The Honorable Tom W. Wolf**  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

**Mr. Thomas Cook**  
Acting State Fire Commissioner

Allegheny Valley Volunteer Fire Company Relief Association of Harmer and Springdale  
Townships Governing Body:

**Mr. Joseph Luera**  
President

**Mr. Charles Miller**  
Vice President

**Mr. Levi Baer**  
Secretary

**Ms. Sandy Benson**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Jennifer Steiner**  
Secretary  
Harmar Township

**Ms. Beth Olejarsz**  
Secretary  
Springdale Township



ALLEGHENY VALLEY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF  
HARMAR AND SPRINGDALE TOWNSHIPS  
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