

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Mount Bethel Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

Northampton County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019

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September 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Tyler Baggitt, President  
Mount Bethel Volunteer Firemen's  
Relief Association  
Northampton County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Mount Bethel Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association (relief association) pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and mandated by the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010 (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019.

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 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 independent confirmations of the cash balance and the investment balance directly from the financial institutions. Therefore, while the relief association provided bank and investment statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2019, the relief association had a cash balance of \$39,519 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$21,442, we were not able to verify those cash and investment balances.

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, 2018 to December 31, 2019:

- 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 – Failure To  
Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

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.

September 15, 2020



EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE  
Auditor General

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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, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and the Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010, (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, 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, Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (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.

Act 118 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, Act 118 authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters’ relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by Act 118, 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.

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Upper Mount Bethel Township	Northampton	\$21,647	\$22,849

## BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2019 were \$60,961, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 39,519
Fair Value of Investments	<u>21,442</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u>\$ 60,961</u>

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019 were \$47,669, 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>1</sup> **The scope of the Department’s audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of these amounts.**

### Expenditures:

#### Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 41,491
Equipment maintenance	2,949
Training expenses	<u>2,465</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 46,905</u>

#### Administrative Services:

Other administrative expenses	\$ 144
Bond premiums	<u>520</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 664</u>

#### Other Expenditures:

Undocumented expenditure*	<u>\$ 100</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>\$ 47,669</u>

\* The relief association was unable to provide adequate supporting documentation evidencing the propriety of an insignificant expenditure amounting to \$100 made during 2019. We disclosed this issue to relief association officials during the conduct of our audit.

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<sup>1</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:

Mount Bethel Volunteer Fire Company

MOUNT BETHEL VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
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:

- Inappropriate Ownership Of Rescue Vehicle

By obtaining reimbursement of \$8,917 from the sale of the vehicle.

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:

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

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



MOUNT BETHEL VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster**

Condition: As was noted in findings in our two prior audit reports, during the current audit period the relief association again failed to maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. Although a listing of relief association owned equipment was provided during the current audit period, it was incomplete because it did not contain the serial numbers to accurately identify equipment owned by the relief association. As such, it was impossible to determine if all equipment purchased during the audit period in the amount of \$41,491 was recorded. In addition, there was no indication that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis to account for the equipment owned by the relief association.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster of all items purchased by the relief association in order to provide an effective accounting control over the relief association's equipment. A cumulative equipment roster of all relief association equipment should include all of the following:

- Types of equipment purchased
- Dates of purchase
- Unit costs
- Names of suppliers
- Serial numbers, if applicable
- Current locations of items
- Final dispositions of sold or damaged equipment
- Evidence of the performance and results of an annual physical inventory

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over equipment by requiring the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster and the performance of an annual physical inventory of equipment. Relief association officials did not provide a reason for why this occurred.

Effect: The continued failure to properly record equipment purchases in a detailed equipment roster prevents officials from effectively monitoring the relief association's equipment purchases. In addition, the failure to maintain a detailed equipment roster and perform an annual physical inventory of equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association equipment.

MOUNT BETHEL VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – (Continued)**

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials maintain a cumulative equipment roster of all equipment owned by the relief association. Furthermore, the relief association should ensure it performs an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment and that the completion of the inventory be sufficiently documented. 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 indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: We are seriously concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit findings and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

MOUNT BETHEL VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

Mount Bethel Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Tyler Baggitt**  
President

**Mr. Chris Finan**  
Vice President

**Mr. Justin Hoffman**  
Secretary

**Mr. Brendan McDonald**  
Treasurer

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

**Ms. Cindy Beck**  
Secretary  
Upper Mount Bethel 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).