

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Sardis Volunteer Fire Company Relief Association

Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018

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September 2019



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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**EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Joseph Paiano, President  
Sardis Volunteer Fire Company  
Relief Association  
Westmoreland County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Sardis Volunteer Fire Company 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, 2017 to December 31, 2018.

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 required to be and was not 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.

We were not able to obtain an independent confirmation of the cash balance directly from the financial institution. Therefore, while the relief association provided bank statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2018, the relief association had a cash balance of \$166,102, we were not able to verify this cash balance.

We were also not able to obtain copies of canceled or imaged checks from the relief association. While the relief association provided copies of bank statements, the relief association failed to provide copies of canceled or imaged checks. Without copies of canceled or imaged checks, we were not able to determine whether two relief association officers authorized and signed the checks as required by Act 118.

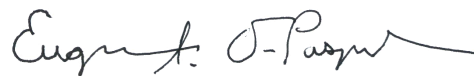
Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, except for the effects, if any, of the matters described in the preceding paragraphs, for the period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018, the relief association, in all significant respects, complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and 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 – Failure To Monitor Investment Activity

The supplementary financial information contained in this report is presented for purposes of additional disclosure and analysis. We performed only limited procedures on the supplementary financial information and, accordingly, express no form of assurance on it.

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 4, 2019



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.

**BACKGROUND – (Continued)**

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Murrysville Borough	Westmoreland	\$46,030	\$42,084

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:

Sardis Volunteer Fire Company

SARDIS VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Finding – Failure To Monitor Investment Activity**

Condition: Relief association officials failed to monitor their investment activity. Specifically, on March 3, 2017, two certificates of deposit (\$8,280 and \$8,998), were considered dormant and were escheated to the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury. As of the last renewal notice dated April 7, 2017, the stated value of the investments amounted to \$17,278 and the reported value by the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury amounted to \$17,278. The relief association was unaware of this condition prior to the conduct of this engagement.

Criteria: The relief association’s governing body has ultimate authority and the fiduciary responsibility for the financial management of relief association’s funds which includes an obligation to monitor the activity of relief association’s investments on a periodic basis which is a prerequisite for sound administration of relief association accounts.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over their investment activity and were unaware that their certificate of deposits, were considered dormant due to inactivity.

Effect: The relief association’s failure to adequately monitor investment activity resulted in a potential loss of funds to pay general operating expenses or for other investment purposes and any future interest income from this investment.

Recommendation: We recommend the relief association contact the Bureau of Unclaimed Property with the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury to obtain the funds from their dormant custodial investment accounts. In addition, the management of the relief association should monitor all future investments to ensure they are maximizing their investment return and safeguarded from loss. 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: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

SARDIS VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
CASH AND INVESTMENT BALANCES  
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

Cash	\$ 166,102
Fair Value of Escheated Investments	<u>17,278</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u><u>\$ 183,380</u></u>



SARDIS VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
 SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION  
 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES  
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2017 TO DECEMBER 31, 2018

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	\$ 15,854
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill	611
Total Benefit Services	\$ 16,465
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 65,429
Equipment maintenance	9,074
Training expenses	2,778
Fire prevention materials	881
Total Fire Services	\$ 78,162
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	\$ 1,420
Bond premiums	200
Total Administrative Services	\$ 1,620
Total Expenditures	\$ 96,247

SARDIS VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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

Sardis Volunteer Fire Company Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Joseph Paiano**  
President

**Mr. Jeremy Gamble**  
Treasurer

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

**Mr. James R. Morrison**  
Secretary  
Murrysville 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).