

Pension Division Newsletter

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Revised Statements of Position

Several revised Statements of Position that reflect changes enacted during the 2012 legislative session have been posted to the Office of the State Auditor’s website.

The revised Statement entitled Interest Earnings for Deferred Members of Volunteer Fire Relief Associations provides examples of the new default interest payment method and options for relief associations that choose to define their own payment method in their bylaws.

The revised Statement entitled Volunteer Fire Relief Member’s Return to Service reflects changes made to the “return to service” law to accommodate the unique needs of defined contribution plans, and to allow firefighters who do not meet resumption of service requirements to receive service credit for time served after returning from a break in service.

The revised Statement entitled Investment Authority for Fire Relief Associations summarizes the numerous changes made to the investment requirements and restrictions for volunteer fire relief associations.

The revised Statements can be viewed at the link provided below, under the “Pensions” heading

<http://www.osa.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=statements>



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Website Overview

Information and resources for relief association trustees are available on the Office of the State Auditor’s website, including training tools, statements of position, newsletters, and sample bylaw guides. A PDF document is attached to this Newsletter which provides an overview of relief association resources on our website.

The PDF document also can be viewed online, at:

<http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/Other/pensionDocs/WebsiteOverview.pdf>.

What's Ahead:

June 30: Reporting deadline for relief associations with assets or liabilities exceeding \$200,000.

August 1: Schedule Form for lump-sum relief associations must be certified to the affiliated municipality. Maximum Benefit Worksheets must be certified for lump-sum, monthly, and monthly/lump-sum relief associations.

September 15: First certification deadline for 2012 state fire aid.

October 1: State fire aid is disbursed for relief associations certified as eligible to receive their aid in the first round of payments.

Reporting Reminder

The 2011 reporting-year forms are due by June 30, 2012, for volunteer fire relief associations with assets or liabilities of at least \$200,000. Relief associations with the June 30 reporting deadline are required to submit audited financial statements in addition to the reporting forms. Please note that once a relief association's assets or liabilities exceed \$200,000, the relief association maintains the June 30 reporting deadline and audit requirement, even if the association's assets and liabilities subsequently drop below the \$200,000 threshold.

Reporting forms for relief associations with assets and liabilities less than the \$200,000 statutory threshold were due by March 31. E-mail notices were sent on May 22 to relief association trustees, municipal officials, and auditors, notifying them that reporting forms for their affiliated relief association were past due. Letters that detailed the specific forms that must be submitted were also sent to each relief association. If you have any questions regarding your relief association's reporting requirements, please contact Gail Richie at (651) 282-6110 or at Gail.Richie@osa.state.mn.us.

Helpful hints for completing the reporting forms can be found at:

http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/forms/pen/ReportingForms/pensionrf_infoandhelpfulhints.pdf.

Resources for Auditors

Resources are available on the Office of the State Auditor website that may be helpful for auditors working with volunteer fire relief associations. The 2011 Minnesota Legal Compliance Audit Guide for Political Subdivisions is meant to act as a reference regarding minimum legal compliance. Section 7 of the Guide is specific to relief associations, and includes statutory citations. PDF and Word versions of the Guide can be accessed at:

<http://www.osa.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=20111223.000>.

Additional resources include links to auditing resources and professional organizations. These links are available on our Helpful Links page, at:

<http://www.osa.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=RelatedLinks>.

Audit reports of public pension plans performed by our office are posted on our website and can be used as a reference. The audits can be viewed at:

<http://www.osa.state.mn.us/list.aspx?type=afs>.

Online Trainings:

[Completing the Schedule Form](#)

[Completing the Maximum Benefit Worksheet](#)

[Completing the Reporting Form](#)

[Completing the Investment Disclosure Report Form](#)

[Relief Association Reporting Requirements](#)

Approval of Expenditures

One of the fiduciary activities specifically assigned to relief association trustees is the expenditure of plan assets. The relief association is a separate entity from the affiliated fire department, and the relief association board of trustees is charged with maintaining relief association accounts. Relief associations should make sure that meetings are scheduled regularly so that expenditures can be approved and disbursed on a timely basis.

Fire department officers have no authority to approve expenditures from relief association accounts unless they are relief association officers, and then only in their capacity as members of the relief association board of trustees.

Submitting Audit Reports

As a reminder, audit reports may now be submitted electronically through the State Auditor’s Form Entry System (SAFES). To submit an audit report electronically through SAFES, the report must be saved as a PDF document and uploaded by the relief association’s accountant or auditor.

Recently, we have seen instances where documents other than audit reports were submitted through SAFES as PDF documents. At this time, the only PDF documents that relief associations should submit through SAFES are audit reports. Annual reporting forms must be submitted as Excel files, if being submitted through SAFES. Other documents, such as bylaws, meeting minutes, and investment policies, must be submitted to the Office of the State Auditor by e-mail, fax, or U.S. mail.

Pension Division Staff

If you have questions, please contact us:

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Office of the State Auditor Website Overview for Volunteer Fire Relief Associations

Other Minnesota State and Local Government sites | [Employment Opportunities](#) | [Home](#)



Minnesota Office of the State Auditor

Rebecca Otto



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Welcome

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What's New at the Office of the State Auditor

- Released: 2010 Criminal Forfeitures in Minnesota Report
- Available: 2012 Forms 51 and 52
- State Auditor's E-Update - 6/1/2012 (pdf, 38k)
- Avoiding Pitfalls: Recording Closed Meetings

Meeting Notices and Materials

- Collaborative Governance Council
- Investment Study Group
- Fire Relief Association Working Group
- Council on Local Results and Innovation

Training Opportunities

- Recording: How to Use SAFES** Click here to view an online training on how to use SAFES (approximately 5 minutes).
- Recording: CTAS Online Training** Recorded online Instructions for installing CTAS Version 7 on Windows Vista or Windows 7. Click here for more information and a link to the training.
- Recorded: Pension Reporting Forms** Recorded online training for completing Pension reporting forms. Click here for more information and links to the trainings.
- more...

Calendar

- June 8 – TIF:** Enforcement deduction information due from county treasurers.
- June 20 – GID: Forfeiture Incident Reporting Form – Law** enforcement agencies must use this form each month to report the disposition of property seized subject to forfeiture. Reporting form(s) must be submitted to the OSA by the 20th of the month following the final disposition of the seized property.
- more...

Newsletters

- Pension Division Newsletter - May 2012 (pdf, 101k)
 - Click here for more Pension Division Newsletters
- TIF Division Newsletter - May 2012 (pdf, 311k)
 - Click here for more TIF Division Newsletters
- CTAS News & Notes - Spring, 2012 (pdf, 233k)
 - Click here for more CTAS Newsletters

The Minnesota Office of the State Auditor provides relief associations with the opportunity to locate reporting forms, training tools, statements of position, and many other resources on its website. The image shown above is the official homepage for the Office of the State Auditor and it can be located at <http://www.osa.state.mn.us>. Four of the tabs on the menu across the top of the web page, directly beneath the Auditor's picture, contain information specific to relief associations. By clicking on one of these tabs, you will see a drop-down menu with choices that can be helpful to you. These menu options and the information they contain are described on the next page.

1. Latest News Tab

Choices under this tab include:

- A. E-Updates – official online news publication of the Office of the State Auditor. Gives information about important topics and reminders of important deadlines.
- B. Articles – contains articles related to certain relief association topics.
- C. Statements of Position - educational resources designed to help relief associations address topics that have arisen or may arise as a result of the State Auditor's oversight of local government.
- D. Pension Newsletter – monthly publications addressing relief association topics. The newsletters provide educational resources and reminders of important due dates.

2. Reports and Data Tab

The Reports and Data menu option opens a drop-down menu with a "Pension Reports" tab. Clicking on this tab opens a page with links to the annual Financial and Investment Report of Volunteer Fire Relief Associations and the annual Large Public Pension Plan Investment Report. The two reports summarize and evaluate the finances and investment performance of the plans.

3. For Local Officials Tab

Choices under this tab include:

- A. Training Opportunities – contains recorded online training sessions. There are a variety of topics available for viewing including information on how to fill out forms, access SAFES to electronically sign forms, and calculate deferred interest.
- B. All about Fire Relief Associations – a question-and-answer section pertaining to fire relief associations.
- C. Pension Documents – provides Sample Bylaw Guides, a booklet and summary of selected relevant statutes pertaining to relief associations, lists of fire and police state aid amounts, and lists of supplemental benefit reimbursement amounts.
- D. Calendar and Deadlines – lists filing deadlines and important reporting dates. Links to the applicable reporting forms are also provided.

4. Forms Tab

Choices under this tab include:

- A. Reporting Forms and Due Dates – provides links to required reporting forms and their applicable due dates.
- B. State Auditor Form Entry System (SAFES) – login page to access online reporting forms, update contact information, submit forms, and to sign forms electronically.
- C. Pension Forms – contains links to relief association reporting forms and resources for completing the forms.

Helpful information is also provided under the other menu options, so we encourage you to explore the Office of the State Auditor's website! Please feel free to contact the Pension Division with any questions at pension@osa.state.mn.us or by phone at (651) 282-6110.