



Good morning everyone.

I wanted to share something with you. In recent weeks, fundraising solicitations and requests for volunteer firefighters have been showing up all over PA. They are from a group called Volunteer Firefighter Alliance from Topeka, Kansas. Below please find a recent article from the Pocono area to review. Please share and warn your local fire departments as well as your residents. There is a tough enough battle to preserve volunteer fire departments without outside intervention filtering well intentioned dollars out of state. It is a shameful attempt to capitalize on good peoples heartstrings. This information was shared last week with State Fire Commissioner Bruce Trego with the intention that the Wolf Administration would share the info and warning to the fire services.

Fake mailers divert donations away from fire department

The pictured mailer from the "Volunteer Firefighter Alliance" was sent to a resident in Winona Lakes, which is a private community in Middle Smithfield Township. The pre-printed envelope instructs the recipient to send his or her donations to the alliance's address in Topeka, Kansas, but no such organization has shared those donations with East Stroudsburg's fire company. East Stroudsburg Volunteer Fire Company's actual fund drive letter is pictured at top. [POCONO RECORD illustration]

By Bill Cameron

Monday

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EAST STROUDSBURG — Residents of the Poconos may have received more than one letter this year soliciting donations for Acme Hose Co. No. 1, the fire department of East Stroudsburg Borough, but only one of them is the real thing.

An unknown sender who claims to collect money on behalf of the borough's firefighters is circulating fraudulent messages via mail, Acme Fire Chief Dale Fetterly said on Monday. No such person or organization has passed those funds along to the fire company.

"These people have never given us any money," Fetterly said. "We got a picture of the letters they're sending out. It's got our name on it, but it's not us soliciting the donations."

Coincidentally, Acme is seeking legitimate donations via mail at this time, Fetterly said. The company holds an annual fundraiser with mailers that usually go out the first week of August.

“It’s just uncanny,” he said. “I don’t know if they were watching our mailers the last couple years or what, but they nailed it timing-wise.”

Acme’s authentic mailer — which is sent only to residents within East Stroudsburg Borough limits — provides a pre-marked envelope and clear instructions on how to send funds directly to the fire station’s 380 Chestnut Street address. This year’s version is printed in black and red ink. An image of one of the company’s fire trucks is visible through the mailing envelope’s front window.

The counterfeit mailer, which is also printed in black and red ink, asks donors to make their contributions to a third-party “Volunteer Firefighter Alliance.” The donation envelope included with that mailer is printed with an address in Topeka, Kansas.

“We were given a heads up by Marshalls Creek Fire Company on Saturday night,” Fetterly said. “These fake mailers have showed up in Marshalls Creek, Winona Lakes, all over the place.”

This apparent fraud follows on the heels of a similar scam reported in the area this month. [Stroud Township Volunteer Fire Department warned in early August that someone was falsely claiming to collect donations for the department via phone calls.](#)

It is not the practice of Stroud Township fire department to make such requests over the phone, Assistant Chief David Smalley had said. The department does use mailers to solicit donations, but those are usually sent around the month of November and addressed to the Stroud Township fire station directly.

Fetterly warns recipients of any such communications to be mindful of the actual sender.

“We hate to see this happen,” he said. “That money will probably get used for something — just not for us.”

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