



**Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury**

*December 5, 2023*

## **Former Scott County Volunteer Fire Chief Indicted for Theft**

*Austin Lewallen led the Paint Rock Volunteer Fire Department*

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has resulted in the indictment of Austin Lewallen, the former chief of the Paint Rock Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) in Scott County.

Comptroller investigators began their review of the department after Scott County officials reported concerns of questionable financial activity within the VFD.

Investigators determined that former fire chief Austin Lewallen stole Paint Rock VFD funds totaling at least \$13,716.71 between May 2022 and January 2023. Lewallen stole most of the money by making over-the-counter bank withdrawals and unauthorized ATM cash withdrawals. He also used the VFD's debit card to make personal purchases and paid a utility bill with Paint Rock VFD funds.



The investigation revealed an additional \$4,700 in questionable cash withdrawals that were not supported with receipts to indicate whether or not the cash was used to benefit the VFD.

Austin Lewallen was removed as fire chief on March 27, 2023. Based upon this investigation, he was indicted by the Scott County Grand Jury in November 2023 on one count of theft of property over \$10,000 and one count of fraudulent use of a debit card.

“During the time this theft occurred, Paint Rock VFD did not have an active board of directors,” said Comptroller Mumpower. “Once Lewallen was removed as fire chief, a board of directors was formed. I encourage the board to establish firm internal controls to ensure money is properly handled and all disbursements are properly documented.”

To view the investigative report, go to [tncot.cc/doireports](https://tncot.cc/doireports). To view a map depicting Comptroller investigations, go to [tncot.cc/mappinginvestigations](https://tncot.cc/mappinginvestigations)

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