



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

July 28, 2005

Mr. Duncan R. Fox  
Deputy General Counsel  
Texas Department of Public Safety  
P.O. Box 4087  
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2005-06793

Dear Mr. Fox:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 229008.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for seven categories of information pertaining to a specified accident. You state that you have released most of the requested information, but claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision," and encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with section 31306 of title 49 of the United States Code and section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Section 31306 of title 49 of the United States Code relates to alcohol and controlled substances testing for operators of commercial motor vehicles and provides in part:

- (a) General requirement. Each employer shall maintain records of its alcohol misuse and controlled substances use prevention programs as provided in this section. The records shall be maintained in a secure location with controlled access.

(b) Period of retention. Each employer shall maintain the records in accordance with the following schedule:

(1) Five years. The following records shall be maintained for a minimum of five years:

(i) Records of driver alcohol test results indicating an alcohol concentration of 0.02 or greater, [and]

(ii) Records of driver verified positive controlled substances test results[.]

...

(3) One year. Records of negative and canceled controlled substances test results (as defined in part 40 of this title) and alcohol test results with a concentration of less than 0.02 shall be maintained for a minimum of one year.

...

49 C.F.R. § 382.401(a)-(b). Section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, titled "Access to facilities and records," provides in part:

(a) Except as required by law or expressly authorized or required in this section, no employer shall release driver information that is contained in records required to be maintained under § 382.401.

...

(d) Each employer shall make available copies of all results for employer alcohol and/or controlled substances testing conducted under this part and any other information pertaining to the employer's alcohol misuse and/or controlled substances use prevention program, when requested by the Secretary of Transportation, any DOT agency, or any State or local officials with regulatory authority over the employer or any of its drivers.

...

(h) An employer shall release information regarding a driver's records as directed by the specific written consent of the driver authorizing release of the information to an identified person. Release of such information by the person receiving the information is permitted only in accordance with the terms of the employee's specific written consent as outlined in § 40.321(b) of this title.

*Id.* § 382.405(a), (d), (h). Section 382.405 also specifies the circumstances under which an employer may release test results. *See id.* § 382.405(b)-(g).

You state that the testing information in the submitted document was obtained by the department pursuant to its regulatory authority in accordance with section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. You further state that no written consent has been given with respect to the disclosure of the test results at issue. Based on your representations and our review of the information at issue, we find that the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations and section 31306 of title 49 of the United States Code. We therefore conclude that the department must withhold the submitted information pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code as information made confidential by law.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

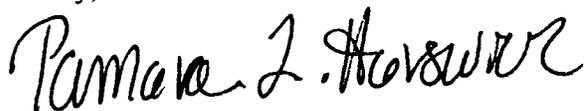
If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be

sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamara L. Harswick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tamara L. Harswick  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

TLH/sdk

Ref: ID# 229008

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. C. Christina Cooke Hudnell  
Attorney at Law  
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(w/o enclosures)