



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 9, 2008

Mr. Gregory Alicie
Open Records Specialist
Baytown Police Department
3200 North Main Street
Baytown, Texas 77521

OR2008-09301

Dear Mr. Alicie:

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# 315222.

The Baytown Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified police report. You state that the department will redact full and partial social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ You claim that portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.²

Section 552.108 of the Government Code provides in pertinent part:

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from [required public disclosure] if:

¹Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

²We note that you have submitted information you have marked as not responsive to the instant request. Our ruling does not address this non-responsive information, and the department need not release it in response to the request.

(1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime;

(2) it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication;

...

(b) An internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution is excepted from [required public disclosure] if:

(1) release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution;

(2) the internal record or notation relates to law enforcement only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication[.]

Gov't Code § 552.108(a)-(b). Generally speaking, subsections 552.108(a)(1) and 552.108(b)(1) are mutually exclusive of subsections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2). Section 552.108(a)(1) protects information, the release of which would interfere with a particular pending criminal investigation or prosecution, while section 552.108(b)(1) encompasses internal law enforcement and prosecution records, the release of which would interfere with on-going law enforcement and prosecution efforts in general. In contrast, sections 552.108(a)(2) and (b)(2) protect information that relates to a concluded criminal investigation or prosecution that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why this exception is applicable to the information that the governmental body seeks to withhold. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977).

You claim that the information you have highlighted in orange is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108(a)(1). You state that the submitted information pertains to a pending criminal prosecution. Based on your representation and our review of the information at issue, we conclude that release of the information highlighted in orange would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Accordingly, the department may withhold the information you have highlighted in orange under section 552.108(a)(1).

You also claim that the information you have highlighted in yellow is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2). You state that this information consists of internal notations used to alert officers of possible safety related issues. However, upon review, we find that you have failed to demonstrate that this information relates to a concluded criminal investigation or prosecution that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. We therefore conclude that the department may not withhold the information you have highlighted in yellow under section 552.108(a)(2) or 552.108(b)(2) of the Government Code.

Next, section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that relates to "a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state [or] a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state." Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). You have highlighted in pink the motor vehicle record information you seek to withhold under section 552.130. We note, however, that the requestor is a representative of an insurance company. As such, the requestor may have a right of access under section 552.023 of the Government Code to the highlighted Texas motor vehicle record information.³ In this instance, it is not clear that the requesting insurance company represents the individual to whom the highlighted motor vehicle record information pertains; therefore, we must rule conditionally. If the requesting insurance company is the individual's authorized representative and has a right of access under section 552.023, then the department may not withhold the highlighted motor vehicle record information from the requestor under section 552.130 of the Government Code. If the requesting insurance company is not the individual's authorized representative, the department must withhold the information you have highlighted in pink under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department may withhold the information you have highlighted in orange under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. If the requestor is not the authorized representative of the individual whose information is at issue, the department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have highlighted in pink under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.

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 file suit in

³Section 552.023 of the Government Code provides a person or a person's authorized representative a special right of access to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests.

Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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 challenge that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Katherine M. Kroll
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KMK/eeg

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Enc. Submitted documents

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(w/o enclosures)