



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

April 9, 2009

Mr. Stan O. Springerley  
Civil & Assistant District Criminal Attorney  
Smith County Courthouse  
100 North Broadway 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Tyler, Texas 75702

OR2009-04744

Dear Mr. Springerley:

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# 339543.

The Smith County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for the policies and procedures for vehicular pursuits conducted by the sheriff. You claim that the submitted vehicular pursuit policy is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the internal records and notations of law enforcement agencies and prosecutors when their release would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Gov't Code § 552.108(b)(1); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 531 at 2 (1989) (quoting *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706, 710 (Tex. 1977)). Section 552.108(b)(1) is intended to protect "information which, if released, would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts to effectuate the laws of this State." *See City of Ft. Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no writ). To demonstrate the applicability of this exception, a governmental body must meet its burden of explaining how and why release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990). This office has concluded that section 552.108(b) excepts from public disclosure information relating to the security or operation of a law enforcement agency. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 (release of detailed use of force guidelines would

unduly interfere with law enforcement), 252 (1980) (Gov't Code § 552.108 is designed to protect investigative techniques and procedures used in law enforcement), 143 (1976) (disclosure of specific operations or specialized equipment directly related to investigation or detection of crime may be excepted). Section 552.108(b)(1) is not applicable, however, to generally known policies and procedures. *See, e.g.*, ORDs 531 at 2-3 (Penal Code provisions, common law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force not protected), 252 at 3 (governmental body failed to indicate why investigative procedures and techniques requested were any different from those commonly known).

In this instance, you state that release of the submitted vehicular pursuit policy would interfere with law enforcement duties and endanger police officers. Based on your arguments and our review of the submitted information, we find that the release of portions of the submitted vehicular pursuit policy, which we have marked, would interfere with law enforcement. However, the remaining portions of the submitted policy consist of administrative policies and procedures of the sheriff and generally known information. Thus, we find that you have failed to establish how public access to the remaining information would interfere with law enforcement or endanger police officers. Accordingly, we conclude that the sheriff may only withhold those portions of the submitted vehicular pursuit policy that we have marked under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code. As no other exceptions are raised, the sheriff must release the remaining information at issue.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Reg Hargrove  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

RJH/eeg

Mr. Stan O. Springerley - Page 3

Ref: ID# 339543

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)