



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

May 12, 2009

Ms. Nicole Webster
Assistant City Attorney
City of Waco
P.O. Box 2570
Waco, Texas 76702-2570

OR2009-06380

Dear Ms. Webster:

~~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# 347190 (Reference #: LGL-09-364).~~

The Waco Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a specified incident. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions 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." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code. You contend that the originating telephone number and address of the 9-1-1 caller, contained in the submitted information, is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code. Chapter 772 of the Health and Safety Code relates to local emergency communications districts. Section 772.318 applies to an emergency 9-1-1 district established in accordance with chapter 772 and makes confidential the originating telephone numbers and addresses of 9-1-1 callers that are furnished by a service supplier. *See* Open Records Decision No. 649 (1996). You state the City of Waco is part of an emergency communication district that was established under section 772.318, and that the 9-1-1 caller's telephone number and address were provided by a 9-1-1 service provider.¹ Thus, based on your representations and our review, we determine the telephone number and address you have marked are confidential pursuant to section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

¹Section 772.318 applies to an emergency communication district for a county with a population of more than 20,000.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by the informer's privilege, which has long been recognized by Texas courts. *See Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969); *Hawthorne v. State*, 10 S.W.2d 724, 725 (Tex. Crim. App. 1928). The informer's privilege protects from disclosure the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided that the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 3 (1988), 208 at 1-2 (1978). The informer's privilege protects the identities of individuals who report violations of statutes to the police or similar law-enforcement agencies, as well as those who report violations of statutes with civil or criminal penalties to "administrative officials having a duty of inspection or of law enforcement within their particular spheres." Open Records Decision No. 279 at 2 (1981); *see* Wigmore, Evidence § 2374, at 767 (McNaughton rev. ed. 1961). The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4-5 (1988).

You state the informant at issue reported an alleged violation of the law to the department. We understand the department is charged with enforcement of the Penal Code, which carries criminal penalties. Based on your representations and our review, we find the department may withhold the informer's name, which you have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer's privilege.

Next, you raise section 552.108 of the Government Code for the information you have marked. Section 552.108(a) excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the information you have marked relates to an open and pending criminal case. Based on your representation and our review, we conclude release of the information at issue 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). Thus, we find section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the information you have marked.

We note, however, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure "basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime." Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic front-page information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88. Therefore, the department must release basic information, including a detailed description of the offense, even if the information does not literally appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). The department

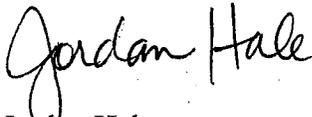
may withhold the rest of the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the telephone number and address you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code. The department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer's privilege. With the exception of basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released to the requestor.

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, 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,



Jordan Hale
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JH/jb

Ref: ID# 347190

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)