



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

June 9, 2009

Ms. P. Armstrong  
Assistant City Attorney  
Criminal Law and Police Division  
City of Dallas  
1400 South Lamar  
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2009-07908

Dear Ms. Armstrong:

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# 349939 (ORR 2009-1951).

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a fatal accident. You indicate you have released some information to the requestor. You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.130 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, you acknowledge, and we agree, the department failed to comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code in seeking an open records decision from this office. A governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. See Gov't Code § 552.302; *Hancock v. State Bd.*

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<sup>1</sup>Although you also raise section 552.101 of the Government Code, you have provided no arguments in support of withholding the submitted information under this exception. Therefore, we do not address the applicability of section 552.101 to the submitted information. See Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302.

<sup>2</sup>We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

of *Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). Normally, a compelling interest is demonstrated when some other source of law makes the information at issue confidential or third-party interests are at stake. See Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). Section 552.108 is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protects a governmental body's interests and may be waived. See Gov't Code § 552.007; Open Records Decision Nos. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). However, the need of a governmental body to withhold information under section 552.108 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason under section 552.302. Open Records Decision No. 586 (1991). Because you inform us the Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney") objects to the release of the requested information, we will consider your claim regarding section 552.108. Section 552.130 of the Government Code is also a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness. Therefore, we will address your argument under this exception as well.

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). In this instance, you state the submitted information relates to a pending criminal prosecution. You also state the district attorney requests the information at issue be withheld because release of this information at this time will negatively affect its ability to prosecute this case. Based upon these representations and our review, we conclude release of the information you have marked 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, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the information you have marked.

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. The department must release basic information, including the names of the investigating officers, 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*). Thus, with the exception of basic information that must be released, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1).

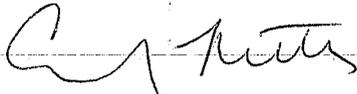
You claim some of the remaining information as excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.130 of the Government Code. Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure "information [that] relates to . . . a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state [or] a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state[.]" Gov't Code § 552.130. Therefore, the department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have marked under section 552.130.

In summary, with the exception of basic information that must be released, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The Texas motor vehicle record information you have marked must be withheld under section 552.130 of the Government Code. Basic information, including the names of the investigating officers, and the remaining submitted information must be released.

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,



Cindy Nettles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 349939

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)