



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 13, 2009

Ms. Jennifer C. Cohen
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2009-14444

Dear Ms. Cohen:

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# 358128 (ORA 09-1515).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for records pertaining to a specified incident. You state that some of the information will be released to the requestor. 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.

Initially, we note the submitted information contains criminal history record information that is confidential by statute.¹ 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. This exception encompasses information protected by chapter 411 of the Government Code, which deems confidential criminal history record information ("CHRI") generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. CHRI means "information collected about a person by a criminal justice agency that consists of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests,

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

detentions, indictments, informations, and other formal criminal charges and their dispositions.” Gov’t Code § 411.082(2). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. *See* Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. *Id.* at 10-12. Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) maintains, except that DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. *See* Gov’t Code § 411.083. Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *See* Gov’t Code § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally* Gov’t Code § 411.090-.127. Furthermore, any CHRI obtained from the DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with Government Code chapter 411, subchapter F. Upon review, we find a portion of the submitted information constitutes CHRI. We have marked the information the department must withhold pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code.

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.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You inform us the information you have marked relates to a pending criminal case. Based upon this representation, we conclude that the 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). Accordingly, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Next, you have marked information which you assert is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.130 of the Government Code. Section 552.130 excepts from public disclosure information that relates to a Texas motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit or a Texas motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state. Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). Accordingly, the department must withhold the Texas driver’s license information you have marked in the remaining information under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code. The department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. As you raise no further exceptions to disclosure, the remaining 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, 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, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



James McGuire
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JM/jb

Ref: ID# 358128

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)