



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 11, 2010

Ms. Luz E. Sandoval-Walker
Assistant City Attorney
City of El Paso
810 Overland Avenue
El Paso, Texas 79901-2516

OR2010-12167

Dear Ms. Sandoval-Walker:

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# 394797 (El Paso Reference No. 2010-07-10-AG).

The El Paso Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You indicate that the department is releasing some of the requested records. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 11 of article 49.25 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which provides as follows:

The medical examiner shall keep full and complete records properly indexed, giving the name if known of every person whose death is investigated, the place where the body was found, the date, the cause and manner of death, and shall issue a death certificate. . . . The records are subject to required public disclosure in accordance with Chapter 552, Government Code, except that a photograph or x-ray of a body taken during an autopsy is excepted from required public disclosure in accordance with Chapter 552, Government Code, but is subject to disclosure:

- (1) under a subpoena or authority of other law; or
- (2) if the photograph or x-ray is of the body of a person who died while in the custody of law enforcement.

Crim. Proc. Code art. 49.25, § 11. You state that the submitted information consists of autopsy photographs. Upon review, we agree that most of the submitted photographs consist of photographs of a body taken during an autopsy. Provided that neither of the statutory exceptions to confidentiality is applicable in this instance, we find that the department must withhold most of the submitted photographs under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 11 of article 49.25 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. However, photograph number DSCN3064 is not a photograph of a body taken during an autopsy and may not be withheld under section 552.101 on that basis. As no further exceptions to its disclosure are raised, photograph number DSCN3064 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,



Laura Ream Lemus
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LRL/jb

Ref: ID# 394797

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)