



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 14, 2015

Mr. Jeffrey W. Giles
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
P. O. Box 368
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2015-26196

Dear Mr. Giles:

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# 591097 (GC No. 22708).

The Houston Emergency Center (the "center") received a request for all 911 audio recordings, dispatch transcripts, and other related records regarding reports of natural gas leaks on or near specified properties during specified dates. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.151 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

Initially, we must address the center's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the claimed exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. *Id.* § 552.301(e). The center received the request for information on September 22, 2015. As of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office written comments stating the reasons why your claimed exceptions apply or a copy or representative sample of the

information requested. Accordingly, we conclude the center failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, 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. Information that is presumed public must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a governmental body may demonstrate a compelling reason to withhold information by showing that the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third-party interests. *See* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Because the center has failed to comply with the procedural requirements of the Act, the center has waived all of its discretionary exceptions to disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision No. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions). Although the center also raises mandatory exceptions to disclosure, you have not submitted the requested information for our review. Accordingly, we have no basis for finding any of the information confidential by law. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302. If you believe the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, you must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Meagan J. Conway
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MJC/eb

Ref: ID# 591097

c: Requestor