



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

February 25, 2005

Ms. Stephanie Bergeron Perdue  
Director  
Environmental Law Division  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
P.O. Box 13087  
Austin, Texas 78711-3087

OR2005-01687

Dear Ms. Perdue:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 219223.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (the "commission") received a request for information pertaining to Baikowski Malakoff Inc. ("Baikowski"), including identified permits, environmental violations, and enforcement actions. You state you have made some of the requested information available to the requestor. You also indicate that the submitted information may be excepted under section sections 552.101 and section 552.110 of the Government Code, but take no position as to whether this information is excepted under either section. You state, and provide documentation showing, that you notified Baikowski of the commission's receipt of the request for information and of the right of Baikowski to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released to the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We have reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that an interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) to submit its reasons, if any, as to why requested information relating to it should be withheld from disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, Baikowski has not submitted

to this office any reasons explaining why the requested information should be withheld. We thus have no basis for concluding that any portion of the submitted information constitutes proprietary information of that company, and the department may not withhold the information on that basis. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 652 (1997) (section 382.041 of the Health and Safety Code only protects information if *prima facie* case is established that the information is a trade secret under Restatement of Torts and if information is identified as confidential when submitting to commission) 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3 (1990). Accordingly, the commission must release the submitted information to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



James L. Coggeshall  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JLC/seg

Ref: ID# 219223

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Andy Tait  
URS Corporation  
3010 LBJ Freeway, Suite 1300  
Dallas, Texas 75234  
(w/o enclosures)

Malakoff Industries, Inc.  
P.O. Box 487  
Malakoff, Texas 75148  
(w/o enclosures)