



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 30, 2006

Ms. Sharon Alexander
Associate General Counsel
Texas Department of Transportation
125 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2483

OR2006-14039

Dear Ms. Alexander:

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# 265742.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for information regarding a specified incident and a named individual, including "drug tests and results" performed on the named individual. You state that the department will redact the social security numbers in the requested records based on section 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.102 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision," and encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. Gov't Code § 552.101. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with section 31306 of title 49 of the United States Code and section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Section 31306 of title 49 of the United States

¹Section 552.147(b) authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

²We 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.

Code relates to alcohol and controlled substances testing for operators of commercial motor vehicles and provides in relevant part:

(b) Testing program for operators of commercial motor vehicles. - (1)(A) In the interest of commercial motor vehicle safety, the Secretary of Transportation shall prescribe regulations that establish a program requiring motor carriers to conduct preemployment, reasonable suspicion, random, and post-accident testing of operators of commercial motor vehicles for the use of a controlled substance in violation of law or a United States Government regulation and to conduct reasonable suspicion, random, and post-accident testing of such operators for the use of alcohol in violation of law or a United States Government regulation. . . .

49 U.S.C. § 31306(b)(1)(A). Section 31306(c) pertains to testing and laboratory requirements and provides that

[i]n carrying out subsection (b) of this section, the Secretary of Transportation shall develop requirements that shall -

...

(7) provide for the confidentiality of test results and medical information (except information about alcohol or a controlled substance) of employees, except that this clause does not prevent the use of test results for the orderly imposition of appropriate sanctions under this section[.]

Id. § 31306(c)(7). Federal regulations clarify the extent to which test results pertaining to operators of motor vehicles are confidential. Section 382.401 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, titled "Retention of records," requires employers to retain certain records pertaining to alcohol and controlled substances testing. *See* 49 C.F.R. § 382.401. Section 382.401 provides in part:

(a) General requirement. Each employer shall maintain records of its alcohol misuse and controlled substances use prevention programs as provided in this section. The records shall be maintained in a secure location with controlled access.

(b) Period of retention. Each employer shall maintain the records in accordance with the following schedule:

(1) Five years. The following records shall be maintained for a minimum of five years:

- (I) Records of driver alcohol test results indicating an alcohol concentration of 0.02 or greater,
- (ii) Records of driver verified positive controlled substances test results,
- (iii) Documentation of refusals to take required alcohol and/or controlled substances tests,
- (iv) Driver evaluation and referrals,
- (v) Calibration documentation,
- (vi) Records related to the administration of the alcohol and controlled substances testing programs, and
- (vii) A copy of each annual calendar year summary required by § 382.403.

(2) Two years. Records related to the alcohol and controlled substances collection process (except calibration of evidential breath testing devices).

(3) One year. Records of negative and canceled controlled substances test results (as defined in part 40 of this title) and alcohol test results with a concentration of less than 0.02 shall be maintained for a minimum of one year.

...

(c) Types of records. The following specific types of records shall be maintained. "Documents generated" are documents that may have to be prepared under a requirement of this part. If the record is required to be prepared, it must be maintained.

(1) Records related to the collection process:

...

(ii) Documents relating to the random selection process;

...

(v) Documents generated in connection with decisions to administer reasonable suspicion alcohol or controlled substances tests; [and]

...

(vi) Documents generated in connection with decisions on post-accident tests[.]

49 C.F.R. § 382.401(a)-(c). Section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, titled "Access to facilities and records," provides in part:

(a) Except as required by law or expressly authorized or required in this section, no employer shall release driver information that is contained in records required to be maintained under § 382.401.

...

(h) An employer shall release information regarding a driver's records as directed by the specific written consent of the driver authorizing release of the information to an identified person. Release of such information by the person receiving the information is permitted only in accordance with the terms of the employee's specific written consent as outlined in § 40.321(b) of this title.

Id. § 382.405(a). Section 382.405 also specifies the circumstances under which an employer may release test results. *See id.* § 382.405(b)-(g).

You state that the information in the submitted documents was obtained by the department pursuant to its regulatory authority in accordance with section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations and is maintained by the department under section 382.401 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. You further state that no written consent has been given with respect to the disclosure of the test results at issue. Based on your representations and our review of the information at issue, we find that the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 382.405 of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations and section 31306 of title 49 of the United States Code. We therefore conclude that the department must withhold the submitted information pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code as information made confidential by law.³

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.

³As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your remaining claims.

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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/eb

Ref: ID# 265742

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Jaime Sanchez
807 West Center Street
Kyle, Texas 78640
(w/o enclosures)