



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

April 3, 2008

Ms. Kristy Ashberry  
Interim City Secretary  
City of Rockwall  
385 South Goliad  
Rockwall, Texas 75087

OR2008-04501

Dear Ms. Ashberry:

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# 310354.

The Rockwall Police Department (the "department") received a request for information relating to a certain traffic accident. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We note that the submitted accident report was completed pursuant to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code § 550.064 (officer's accident report). Section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code states that except as provided by subsection (c), accident reports are privileged and confidential.<sup>1</sup> *See id.* § 550.065(b). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides for the release of accident reports to a person who provides two of the following three items of information: (1) date of the accident; (2) name of any person involved in the accident; and (3) specific location of the accident. *See id.* § 550.065(c)(4). Under this provision, the Texas Department of Transportation or another governmental entity is required to release a copy of an accident report to a person who provides the agency with

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<sup>1</sup>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 that another statute makes confidential.

two or more of the items of information specified by the statute. *Id.* In this instance, the requestor provided the department with all three pieces of information pursuant to section 552.065(c)(4). Therefore, the department must release the accident report under section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code. Although you contend that the report is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code, the exceptions found in the Act generally do not apply to information that is made public by other statutes. *See* Open Records Decision No. 525 (1989) (statutory predecessor). Thus, the department must release the submitted accident report in its entirety 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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, 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 challenge 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Dobie".

Bill Dobie  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

WJD/sdk

Ref: ID# 310354

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Joel Wells  
6362 CR 2560  
Royse City, Texas 75189  
(w/o enclosures)