



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 12, 2010

Ms. Jennifer C. Cohen
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773

OR2010-05085

Dear Ms. Cohen:

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# 376057 (ORA # 10-0153).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for all information pertaining to a specified incident, including records, files, policies and procedures, and related insurance policies or indemnity agreements. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

We must address the department's procedural obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, the governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving the request (1) general written comments stating the reasons why the stated 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. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e). You state you received the request for information on January 26, 2010. As of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office comments explaining why the stated exception applies or a copy or representative sample of the information at issue. Consequently, we find the department 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 submit to this office the information required in section 552.301(e) results in the legal presumption that the information is public and must be released. The requested information is therefore presumed to be subject to required public disclosure and must be released, unless there is a compelling reason to withhold any of 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). This statutory presumption can generally be overcome when information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3, 325 at 2 (1982). Section 552.108 is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protects the governmental body's interests and may be waived by the governmental body. Thus, this exception does not demonstrate a compelling reason to withhold information from the public. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions), 586 (1991) (governmental body may waive section 552.108). Because you have not submitted the information for which you seek a ruling, we determine that the department has waived its claim under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Thus, we have no choice but to order the information at issue 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.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,



Sarah Casterline
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SEC/eeg

Ref: ID# 376057

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)