



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 7, 2010

Lieutenant William T. Edmundson
Record Division
Pharr Police Department
1900 South Cage
Pharr, Texas 78577-6751

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

OR2010-09971

Dear Lt. Edmundson:

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# 390962.

The Pharr Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a fatal motor vehicle accident. You state that some responsive information has been released to the requestor. You claim that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted documents include a CR-3 accident report form completed pursuant to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code § 550.064 (officer's accident report). Section 550.065(b) states that, except as provided by subsection (c) or subsection (e), accident reports are privileged and confidential. *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 pieces of information: (1) the date of the accident; (2) the name of any person involved in the accident; and (3) the specific location of the accident. *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 two or more of the items of information specified by the statute. *Id.* In this instance, the requestor has provided the department with two of the three specified items of information. Accordingly, the department must release the submitted

CR-3 accident report to this requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code.

Next, we address your claim under section 552.108 of the Government Code for the remaining information. Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). We note that the submitted information includes a statutory warning and a notice of suspension. Because copies of these documents, which we have marked, have been provided to the arrestee, we find that their release will not interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Therefore, the department may not withhold the marked statutory warning and notice of suspension under section 552.108(a)(1). You state the remaining information relates to a pending criminal case. Based upon your representation and our review, we conclude that the release of the remaining information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the remaining information.

However, basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-8; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of the statutory warning, notice of suspension, and basic information, which you state has already been released, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1).

We note that the statutory warning and notice of suspension contain information that is subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.130 provides that information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s license or driver’s license issued by a Texas agency is excepted from public release. Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(1). Upon review,

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception such as section 552.130 on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

we find the department must withhold the information we have marked in the statutory warning and notice of suspension under section 552.130 of the Government Code.²

In summary, the department must release the submitted CR-3 accident report to this requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code. With the exception of the statutory warning, notice of suspension, and basic information, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we have marked in the statutory warning and notice of suspension under section 552.130 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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 390962

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

²We note this office recently issued Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009), a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information, including a Texas driver's license number under section 552.130 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.