



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 23, 2011

Mr. John Ohnemiller
First Assistant City Attorney
City of Midland
P.O. Box 1152
Midland, Texas 79702

OR2011-07232

Dear Mr. Ohnemiller:

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# 422765.

The Midland Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified traffic accident. You state you have released some of the requested information. You claim the submitted 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 information includes a CR-3 accident report form that was 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), accident reports are privileged and confidential. 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) date of the accident; (2) name of any person involved in the accident; and (3) 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 pieces of information specified by the statute. *Id.* In this instance, the requestor has provided the department with the required pieces of information pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4). Therefore, the department must release the submitted accident report form to this requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code 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). A governmental body claiming section 552.108 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). You state the submitted information relates to a pending investigation and prosecution. We note that the information you seek to withhold contains a statutory warning and a notice of suspension. The arresting officer provided copies of these forms to the arrestee. You have not explained how releasing this information, which has already been seen by the arrestee, would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of this crime. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Accordingly, the statutory warning and notice of suspension may not be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1). However, we conclude that 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. App.— Houston [14th Dist.] 1975)(court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases) *writ ref’d n.r.e.*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

We note that section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic front-page information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-187; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the statutory warning, and the notice of suspension, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

We note that the statutory warning and notice of suspension contain Texas driver’s license information. Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that relates to “a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit issued by an agency of this state.” Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(1). Accordingly, the department must withhold the Texas driver’s license information we have marked under section 552.130.

In summary, the department must release the accident report form to this requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code. With the exception of basic information, the statutory warning, and the notice of suspension, 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 under section 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ The remaining information must be released to the requestor.

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,



Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PL/eb

Ref: ID# 422765

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹We note this office issued Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009), a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information, including Texas driver's license numbers, under section 552.130 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.