



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

May 29, 2013

Ms. Ellen Rodger  
Open Records/Warrants/Sex Offenders  
Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office  
1220 West Dallas  
Canton, Texas 75103

OR2013-08891

Dear Ms. Rodger:

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# 489228.

The Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for audio recordings of 9-1-1 calls and radio transmissions and any video recordings or photographs regarding a specified incident. You claim 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 sheriff's office's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code describes the procedural obligations placed on a governmental body that receives a written request for information it wishes to withhold. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, a 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 id.* § 552.301(e). You inform us the sheriff's office received the request on March 25, 2013. Accordingly, the sheriff's office's fifteen-business-day deadline was April 15, 2013. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted for our review a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find the sheriff's office 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 comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *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, 381-81 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). A compelling reason exists when third-party interests are at stake or when information is confidential under other law. Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977). Because the sheriff's office has failed to comply with the requirements of the Act, the sheriff's office has waived its argument under section 552.108 of the Government Code, which is a discretionary exception that does not make information confidential under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions in general), 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). Thus, we have no choice but to order you to release the requested information in accordance with section 552.302 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](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,



Kathryn R. Mattingly  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KRM/bhf

Ref: ID# 489228

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor