



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 20, 2017

Ms. L. Carolyn Nivens
Counsel for the City of Seabrook Fire Department
Ross, Banks, May, Cron & Cavin, P.C.
7700 San Felipe, Suite 550
Houston, Texas 77063

OR2017-21519

Dear Ms. Nivens:

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# 677441 (File# 3957-1/Zaveri).

The City of Seabrook Fire Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to department fire hydrants. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

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 section encompasses information protected by other statutes. As part of the Texas Homeland Security Act ("HSA"), sections 418.176 through 418.182 were added to chapter 418 of the Government Code. These provisions make certain information related to terrorism confidential. You assert the requested data is confidential under section 418.181 of the Government Code, which provides "[t]hose documents or portions of documents in the possession of a governmental entity are confidential if they identify the technical details of particular vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure to an act of terrorism." *Id.* § 418.181. The fact that information may relate to a governmental body's security concerns does not make the information *per se* confidential under the HSA. *See* Open Records Decision No. 649 at 3 (1996) (language of confidentiality provision controls scope of its protection). Furthermore, the mere recitation by a governmental body of a statute's key terms is not sufficient to demonstrate the applicability of the claimed provision. As with any exception to disclosure, a governmental body asserting one of the confidentiality provisions of the HSA must adequately explain how the responsive records fall within the scope of the claimed

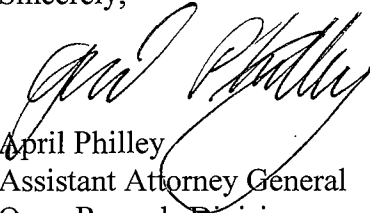
provision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must explain how claimed exception to disclosure applies).

You explain the requested information contains the exact location of the department's fire hydrants. You assert, and we agree, the department's fire hydrant system is critical infrastructure. *See generally id.* § 421.001 (defining "critical infrastructure" to include "all public or private assets, systems, and functions vital to the security, governance, public health and safety, economy, or morale of the state or the nation"). You explain the release of the requested data could provide a potential terrorist with details regarding the hydrants, which the terrorist could use to introduce contaminants, hinder the City of Seabrook's ability to deliver water service, or cause widespread flooding. Based on your arguments and our review of the submitted information, we find that you have demonstrated release of the submitted information would identify the technical details of particular vulnerabilities of the department's fire hydrant system to an act of terrorism. Thus, the submitted information must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.181 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



April Philley
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AP/sb

Ref: ID# 677441

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)