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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 20, 2020

Mr. Nicholas Morrell
Assistant General Counsel
Office of the General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2020-11358

Dear Mr. Morrell:

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# 826644 (ID JN0041).

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to the use of force against a named inmate. You state you will release some information. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.134 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.134(a) of the Government Code relates to inmates of the department and provides the following:

Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the [department] is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). Section 552.134 is explicitly made subject to section 552.029, which provides, in pertinent part:

Notwithstanding Section . . . 552.134, the following information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the [department] is subject to required disclosure under Section 552.021:

...

(8) basic information regarding the death of an inmate in custody, an incident involving the use of force, or an alleged crime involving the inmate.

Id. § 552.029(8). You contend the submitted information falls within the scope of section 552.134. Upon review, we agree the submitted information pertains to an inmate confined in a facility operated by the department and is subject to section 552.134. However, we note the information at issue pertains to an incident involving the use of force. Thus, pursuant to section 552.029(8), the department must release basic information concerning the incident involving the use of force. For purposes of section 552.029(8), basic information includes the time and place of the incident, the names of inmates and department employees who were directly involved, a brief narrative of the incident, a brief description of any injuries sustained by anyone involved, and information regarding any criminal charges or disciplinary actions that were filed as a result of the incident. Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, the department must withhold the submitted information under section 552.134 of the Government Code.¹

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Melanie Villars
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MJV/rm

Ref: ID# 826644

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.