



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 29, 2026

Mr. Harrison Long
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County Attorney's Office
1019 Congress Street, 15th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2026-017404

Dear Mr. Long:

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# 26-008646 (Ref. Nos. 26PIA0240).

The Harris County Fire Marshal's Office (the "fire marshal's office") received a request for information pertaining to a specified case. You indicate you have released some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a) 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: (1) 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 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, for purposes of section 552.108, the arson investigation division of a fire department is considered a law enforcement unit. *See Open Records Decision No. 127 at 8 (1976)*. You state the submitted information relates to an ongoing criminal investigation. Based upon this representation and our review, we conclude the release of the submitted 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) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, 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 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). Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the fire marshal’s office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Finally, the fire marshal’s office asks us to issue a previous determination permitting it to withhold information subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of requesting an attorney general opinion. See Gov’t Code § 552.301(a) (allowing governmental body to withhold information subject to previous determination); *Houston Chronicle v. Mattox*, 767 S.W.2d 695, 698 (Tex. 1989) (acknowledging this office has authority under section 552.301 of the Government Code to decide what constitutes a previous determination); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (describing the two types of previous determinations). We note section 552.011 of the Government Code states “[t]he attorney general shall maintain uniformity in the application, operation, and interpretation” of the Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Gov’t Code § 552.011. Pursuant to this legislative mandate, section 552.011 grants the attorney general the authority to “prepare, distribute, and publish any materials, including detailed and comprehensive written decisions and opinions, that relate to or are based on” the Act. *Id.* We further note the Act requires governmental bodies to promptly release public information requested under the Act within a reasonable time, without delay. *Id.* § 552.221(a); Open Records Decision No. 664 at 5 (2000).

With the foregoing in mind and upon due consideration, we issue this ruling, which constitutes a previous determination allowing the fire marshal’s office to withhold certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of first requesting an attorney general decision, so long as the fire marshal’s office has not previously received a request for the information from the same requestor in the manner described below. See ORD 673. This decision is intended to encourage the prompt release of requested public information by increasing the efficiency of the review process under the Act by clearly identifying information the fire marshal’s office may withhold under the circumstances delineated below. See Gov’t Code §§ 552.011, .221; Open Records Decision Nos. 684 (2009), 673.

Accordingly, the fire marshal’s office may withhold certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of first requesting a ruling from this office in the following circumstances:

1. the fire marshal’s office makes a good faith determination that the information at issue relates to the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime, and the release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of an open or pending criminal matter;

2. the fire marshal's office will release at least the basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime (the "releasable information") from the requested information;
3. the fire marshal's office will produce the releasable information to the requestor pursuant to the requirements of the Act within five business days after the date the request for information was received;
4. the fire marshal's office will provide the requestor with the notice included in Appendix A of this ruling when the fire marshal's office responds to the request pursuant to the requirements of this previous determination; and
5. the fire marshal's office has not previously received a request for the same information from the same requestor after the fire marshal's office has provided the requestor with the releasable information.

See Gov't Code § 552.011. If any of the above circumstances change—or any other law, facts, or circumstances involving the requestor or the status of the requested information changes—the fire marshal's office may not rely upon this ruling as a previous determination to withhold the information at issue. *See* ORD 673 at 7. Additionally, the fire marshal's office may not rely on this previous determination in response to requests in which basic information is not responsive. For example, no basic information is at issue in a request for only a dashboard camera video recording or 9-1-1 call audio recording. Thus, the fire marshal's office may not rely upon this previous determination in response to those types of requests. Furthermore, this previous determination does not apply to situations in which other law may require some or all of the information at issue to be disclosed. *See, e.g.*, Crim. Proc. Code arts. 2B.0154 (detailing right of access to videos made in connection with various types of driving while intoxicated offenses), 2A.201 (detailing right of access to written report to law enforcement agency of alleged violation of Penal Code sections 31.17 and 32.51); Gov't Code §§ 411.081-1410 (detailing rights of access to criminal history record information), 560.002(1)(A) (detailing rights of access to fingerprints and other biometric identifiers); Transp. Code §§ 550.065 (detailing rights of access to collision report forms), 724.018 (detailing right of access to blood or breath specimen analysis results). We also note this previous determination does not permit the disclosure of basic information in those instances in which the entirety of the information at issue must be withheld. *See, e.g.*, Fam. Code §§ 58.008 (detailing circumstances under which certain information related to juvenile offenders must be withheld in its entirety), 261.201 (detailing circumstances under which certain information related to investigations of child abuse or neglect must be withheld in its entirety); Open Records Decision No. 393 (1983) (stating, because the identifying information of a sexual assault victim was inextricably intertwined with other releasable information, the county attorney's office was required to withhold the information in its entirety). We further note this previous determination does

not permit the fire marshal's office to withhold citations; DIC-24 statutory warnings; DIC-25 notices of suspension; criminal trespass warnings; notices of code violations; triplicate forms; or information subject to section 552.007 or section 552.022 of the Government Code, other than information subject to section 552.022(a)(1). *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.007, .022(a)(1)-(18), .108(a)(1). However, the use of this previous determination does not preclude the fire marshal's office from withholding information pursuant to other statutory authority or previous determinations that apply to the fire marshal's office. *See, e.g., id.* §§ 552.1175(f), .130(c), .136(c), .147(b); ORD 684.

If the fire marshal's office's use of this previous determination does not fall within all of the circumstances delineated above, the requirements of the Act apply, including section 552.301 of the Government Code, and deadlines under the Act run from the date the fire marshal's office received the initial written request for information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a); *Mattox*, 767 S.W.2d at 698. Consequently, misapplication of this previous determination may result in the presumption the requested information is public. *See* Gov't Code § 552.302. Thus, if the fire marshal's office is unsure as to the applicability of this previous determination to information responsive to a request for information, the fire marshal's office should request a ruling from this office. Additionally, this office may modify or withdraw this previous determination for any reason, including, but not limited to, misapplication of this previous determination. *See id.* § 552.011; *Mattox*, 767 S.W.2d at 698; *see also* Open Records Decision Nos. 485 at 3 (1987), 673 at 5. Finally, if the fire marshal's office later requests a ruling from this office in response to a second request for the same information from the same requestor, the fire marshal's office should notify this office it relied upon this previous determination in its response to the initial request.

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,

Marvin Okafor
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MO/tb

Ref: ID# 26-004160

c: Requestor

Appendix A

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Date

Requestor name

Requestor address 1

Requestor address 2

Requestor city, state zip

Dear M:

NOTICE:

On [date], we received your public information request for [description of information requested], dated [date request received] (the “request”). In order to promote governmental efficiency and encourage the prompt release of information, as required by the Public Information Act, we have relied upon Open Records Letter No. 2026-##### (2026) in responding to your request. We do so within five business days of your request.

The fire marshal’s office has made a good faith determination the information you requested:

- deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime and the release of the records would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of an open or pending criminal matter.

This information is subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The fire marshal’s office also determined you have not previously requested this information.¹ Therefore, pursuant to the previous determination granted by the Office of the Attorney General in Open Records Letter No. 2026-#####, the fire marshal’s office is releasing some information to you, and is withholding the remaining responsive information subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Please note, we are withholding the following specified types of information:

- Incident report (except basic information)
- Witness/suspect interview(s)
- Video recording(s)
- Audio recording(s)
- Other (specify documents withheld):

If you have questions regarding the use of this previous determination, please call the fire marshal’s office at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or for more information concerning your rights and the responsibilities of the fire marshal’s office, please visit the Office of the Attorney

¹ If you request this information a second time, the fire marshal’s office must request a ruling from the Office of the Attorney General (the “OAG”) in order to withhold the information. See Open Records Letter No. 2026-#####.

General's website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/108-previous-determination>, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. You may also review general information about the Public Information Act, including the types of information included in basic information, in the OAG's Public Information Handbook at <http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government>.