

**Governor's Office of Homeland Security
and Emergency Preparedness
State of Louisiana**

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



JAMES B. WASKOM
DIRECTOR

**Public Records Request Policy
Policy Number: GEN-0001**

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Approval:


James B. Waskom, Director

I. POLICY

All public records requests must be submitted in writing to the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), Attn: Custodian of Records.

II. PURPOSE

To insure compliance with the Louisiana Public Records Law Act (La. R.S. 44:1 *et seq.*).

III. CUSTODIAN OF RECORDS

The official custodian of records for GOHSEP is the Executive Counsel.

IV. SUBMITTING A PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

A. A public records request must be submitted to the Custodian of Records by one of the following methods:

- Email: gohsepcor@la.gov
- Fax: (225) 925-7348
- Hand Deliver, US Mail, UPS or Fed Ex:
Attn: Custodian of Records
Governor's Office of Homeland Security
and Emergency Preparedness
7667 Independence Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

- B. Public records request received by an individual GOHSEP staff member shall be responded to as follows: the staff member shall send a message to the requestor rejecting the request and directing the requestor to send the request to the Custodian of Records by one of the methods stated in paragraph (A) above. The requestor shall be sent a copy of the Public Records Request form. The Custodian of Records shall be copied on all such correspondence.

V. RESPONDING TO A PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

- A. Upon receipt of a public records request, the Custodian of Records or his designee shall as soon as practical and within the delays set forth by law, contact the appropriate agency personnel, who shall provide information as to the availability of the documents described in the request and the approximate time it will take to produce them. It is suggested that the designee contact the requestor and corroborate the request.
- B. The Custodian of Records or his designee shall respond to the requestor in writing, within the delays set by law (three days from receipt of request), that the request has been received, that the requested information is available and is not subject to an exception, exemption or limitation to disclosure, the approximate date the records will be produced and procedures for payment of reproduction costs. If the requested documents are subject to an exception, exemption or limitation, the request shall be rejected and the Custodian of Records or his designee shall specifically state the legal grounds for rejection of the request.
- C. The Custodian of Records or his designee shall coordinate with the appropriate GOHSEP staff who shall search and retrieve the documents stated in the request.
- D. Upon receipt of the requested documents from the GOHSEP staff and payment of any copying fees due, the Custodian of Records or his designee shall send the documents to the requestor specifying the documents which have been produced and specifying any reasons for those not produced, i.e. not in the possession of GOHSEP or subject to an exception, exemption or limitation under law. The correspondence shall state that GOHSEP considers the request satisfied.
- E. GOHSEP personnel shall coordinate with the Custodian of Records or his designee to reproduce the documents identified in the request.
- F. In the event the public records request is for an inspection of documents, the Custodian of Records or his designee shall coordinate same with the applicable GOHSEP staff.

G. Responses are to be made only to the person making the request.

H. The Custodian of Records or his designee shall be responsible to assure that GOHSEP maintains a copy of all responses to public records requests.

VI. ESTIMATE OF FEES:

If an estimate of costs is requested, the requestor must specify that and copies will not be made until after the requestor provides written confirmation of the order. If payment is not received within 10 working days after notice is forwarded by GOHSEP to the requestor, it may be necessary for the requestor to initiate a new request.

Whenever possible, all responses to requests for public records shall be in electronic format (email, CD, DVD), which will not necessitate the collection of a fee for copying. In the event that the response by electronic means is not possible, the Custodian of Records or his designee shall provide an estimate of costs will be given to the requestor as follows:

A. Fees:

If the charging of fees for document copying is necessary, such charges will be as follows:

- 1) **Uniform Fee Schedule; Administrative Code:** The Uniform Fee Schedule for copies of public records is published in the Louisiana Administrative Code at LAC 4:1.301, Part I, Chapter - Fees.
- 2) **Local Access to GOHSEP Public Records** (View the Public Record at GOHSEP): There is no fee assessed to view the public records at the GOHSEP office.
- 3) **Free or Reduced Rate:** In order for the GOHSEP to consider a free or reduced rate copy of the public record, the requestor must (1) qualify and (2) certify qualification for free or reduced rate. See *GOHSEP Certification for Free or Reduced Rates Form*. The request must also submit a *Public Records Request Form*.

B. Upon receipt of confirmation of payment from the requestor and collection of the records requested, the Custodian of Records or his designee will forward an invoice to the requestor. Fees shall be paid by cashier's check or money order payable to the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and forwarded to:

Attn: Custodian of Record
Governor's Office of Homeland Security
and Emergency Preparedness

7667 Independence Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

C. Records shall not be surrendered to the requestor until fees, where applicable, are received.

VII. FORM LETTERS

In order to expedite the public information request process, GOHSEP provides the following form letters.

- A. Public Records Request Form
- B. Certification for Free or Reduced Rates Form

VIII. QUESTIONS:

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Executive Counsel or his/her designee at (225) 925-7500.

IX. VIOLATIONS:

Employees found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.