

From Delta County Emergency Management Coordinator – Tanner Crutcher:

Delta County Appoints Local Health Authority

For Immediate Release:

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The Delta County Commissioners' Court met on Monday, April 13th, and considered and inter-local agreement with Hopkins County for the appointment of a Local Health Authority (LHA). Delta County had currently been served by a regional public health authority from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Dr. Sharon Huff. The Commissioners' Court approved on Monday the appointment of Dr. I.L. Balkcom IV as the LHA for Delta County. Dr. Balkcom was currently serving in this role for neighboring Hopkins County. Following the approval of the Commissioners' Court, Dr. Balkcom was sworn in by Judge Murray.

The county health authority is a competent physician legally qualified to practice under the laws of the state of Texas and of reputable professional standing. This physician is appointed under the provisions of Chapter 121 of Vernon's Civil Statutes Health and Safety Code to administer state and local laws relating to public health within the appointing body's jurisdiction. The health authority must take and subscribe to the official oath and file a copy with the Board. This person may serve the County in the absence of a local health department.

The health authority advises the Commissioners Court or city officials on health-related matters and also enforces laws that protect the health of that jurisdiction. The local health authority is assisted by DSHS regional staff in epidemiological investigations, and in providing certain laboratory and public health nursing services. The medical judgment of the health authority guides health law enforcement.

The general duties of a health authority include:

Establishes, maintains and enforces quarantine in the health authority's jurisdiction;

Aids the Board in relation to local quarantine, inspection, disease prevention and suppression, birth and death statistics, and general sanitation;

Reports the presence of contagious, infectious, and dangerous epidemic diseases to the Board in the manner and at the times prescribed by the Board;

Reports to the Board on any subject on which it is proper for the Board to direct that a report be made; and

Aids the Board in enforcing the following within the jurisdiction of the health authority:

- proper rules, requirements, and ordinances;
- sanitation laws;
- quarantine laws; and
- vital statistics collections

The health authority also must serve the Commissioners Court, which may take action or adopt rules necessary or expedient to promote health or suppress disease; to prevent the introduction of a communicable disease into the community; establish, maintain and regulate hospitals; and abate nuisance injurious to the public health. The court may fine a person who fails or refuses to observe the orders and rules of the health authority.