

A letter from Bowie County's local health authority to a Texas district judge expresses concern over the rising rates of COVID-19 infection in the area and describes the situation as "critical."

The Aug. 14 letter from Texarkana physician Matt Young to 5th District Judge Bill Miller recommends the suspension of in-person jury trials for at least two weeks.

Young's letter lists five "contributing factors" as having influenced his opinion: "increasing number of cases due to community spread, new cases related to the reopening of schools daily, trend of rising COVID deaths, shortage of PPE, supplies, and healthcare workers and a taxed regional healthcare system."

Texas has a prohibition against in-person trials until Oct. 1 unless permission is obtained from the state's Office of Court Administration. Last week Miller and 202nd District Judge John Tidwell had pre-approved plans to try cases this week. Tidwell said he and Miller conferred further with Young and Bowie County Judge Bobby Howell as well as Region 10 Administrative Judge Alfonso Charles on Aug. 14 and decided to move forward with one trial and delay another.

Young was named the Local Health Authority by city and county officials when they opened up their Emergency Operations Center (now known as the Joint Operations Center) in March, during the early days of the pandemic.

Bowie County's infection rate has risen steadily as schools and businesses reopen, daily infection numbers show. Howell said all citizens should wear a mask when in public, practice social distancing of at least six feet and avoid any large gathering.

"I personally think it is selfish not to wear a mask or socially distance," Howell said.

National health authorities and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend wearing a mask at all times in public spaces and in common areas of households where one member's contacts may put them at greater risk for infecting others in the same home. Good hand hygiene, including frequent and thorough handwashing and the use of hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol, is essential also.

The flu season also has apparently gotten an early start in the area with several cases showing up last week in the area.

Dr Bob Fry ER physician at Wadley regional Medical Center will discuss the flu cases and the effect on the COVID pandemic on the NESHOOR today at NOON