



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Media Contact: James Hayes, Environmental Health Specialist
Phone: (360)778-6040
E-mail address: jhayes@co.whatcom.wa.us

**Homeowners Can Become Certified to Do Their Own Septic System Inspections
at Free Class on July 19**

BELLINGHAM, WA—The Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) is offering another installment of its successful training that certifies homeowners to conduct the required inspection of their home's septic system. At this free, two-hour workshop on July 19, homeowners will learn the necessary steps to confirm that their septic system is operating properly and be trained in the steps to complete a septic system evaluation.

Homeowner trainings are one way WCHD is providing more options and better efficiency for homeowners with septic systems. Since WCHD began offering the classes in 2009, over 5,800 homeowners have been trained to do their own septic system inspections, reducing the financial burden on homeowners to complete these required, routine checks of their system. Approximately 14% of all septic inspections completed annually are done by homeowners.

The training is also being promoted by partners involved with Whatcom County's Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) program, whose aim is to reduce water pollution from fecal coliform bacteria. Septic systems are one source of this pollution, and correcting OSS problems to prevent system leaks is an important part of reducing bacterial pollution. "As a partner with Whatcom County's PIC program, the Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) promotes stewardship and assists landowners with their conservation choices. Septic maintenance is just another type of land stewardship that protects our shared resources and our own families' health, and we encourage folks to take advantage of the free homeowner workshops offered by WCHD as part of their on-going stewardship efforts," says Aneka Sweeney, Education and Outreach Coordinator for WCD.

Septic system evaluations are inspections of a home's wastewater treatment system; they ensure the system is functioning well so that sewage and wastewater, and the disease-causing bacteria they contain, don't leak or spill into the surrounding environment. About 2-3% of evaluated systems need to be replaced each year, but most evaluations identify minor problems before costly repairs or system replacements are needed.

Septic systems, also known as on-site sewage systems (OSS), must be evaluated either annually or once every three years, depending on the type of system. Evaluations are often completed by a private, licensed operations & maintenance specialist, and in certain cases the evaluation must be completed by a professional. In many cases, however, the evaluation can be done by the homeowner.

The July 19 training will be held at the WECU Education Center at 5659 Barrett Road in Ferndale from 6:00-8:00pm. Pre-registration is required by contacting the health department at (360)778-6000, and registration is limited to 50 participants. A free, online training is also available for homeowners who wish to be certified. More information on trainings and operating and maintaining septic systems can be found at www.whatcomcounty.us/1744/Operation-and-Maintenance-OM.

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