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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS TRAINING THAT EXPANDS OPTIONS FOR HOMEOWNER EVALUATIONS OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS**

**BELLINGHAM, WA**—The Whatcom County Health Department is offering another installment of its successful training that certifies homeowners to inspect their own septic systems. At this free, two-hour workshop on October 24, homeowners will learn the necessary steps to confirm that their septic system is well-maintained and operating properly and be trained in how to complete their required septic system evaluation.

“We’ve heard that OSS evaluations can be a financial burden for homeowners, so we’re very pleased to be able to offer this low-cost, low-barrier alternative,” says Mike Kim, environmental health supervisor with the Whatcom County Health Department. “Around 14% of all evaluations are completed by homeowners, and we’ve seen positive outcomes for those who’ve been trained and do it themselves.”

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. Homeowner self-evaluations are key to providing more options and better efficiency for homeowners with an OSS.

OSS evaluations are inspections of a home’s personal 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. Over 3,500 OSS evaluations have been completed to date in 2017. 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.

The October 24 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, on-line 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](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/1744/Operation-and-Maintenance-OM).

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