



**NEWS RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**

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**Five Holden staff return to Village**  
*Phase One of "Safe Return to Village" plan*

**CHELAN, WA. January 2, 2026** - Five Holden Village staff members returned to the Village Thursday (January 1) via helicopter to establish a long term winter caretaker team. This is the first wave of staff members returning to the Village as part of a "Safe Return to Village" plan developed by the executive directors, board of directors, operations manager, and risk and safety lead. The three individuals who entered the Village on December 22 have now safely departed.

The caretaker team is led by Operations Manager Steve Johnson. With no initial damage observed, the team will focus on restarting Holden's systems and infrastructure. Additional staff members are expected to join this 5-person crew in the days to come. The caretaker team will ultimately include 10-15 people with a regular schedule of resupply trips and relief crews as needed.

Holden Village will continue to review its standard operating procedures for mitigating the higher-than-usual risks the team will face this winter, emergency medical processes, new communication standards, revised health screenings, helicopter resupply rhythms, and additional protocols where appropriate.

As a reminder, following the landslides of December 10-11, 2025, Holden Village remains closed to unauthorized visitors. Any unsanctioned presence in the Village puts individuals and the organization at risk. Geologic engineers and avalanche experts stress that last month's events have changed the risks along USFS 8301 and it will take some time before new baselines for avalanche behavior can be understood. US Forest Service representatives will present initial processes and timelines for road repair to Holden Village leadership in early to mid-January.

However long the repairs take, Holden Village will be ready to welcome all people into the wilderness again. In the meantime, say Executive Directors Bjørn and Elise Peterson, "We

cannot wait to welcome everyone back to the village. But wherever Villagers are, we remain committed to creating a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world.”

Thank you for supporting Holden Village.

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### *About the Village*

*Located in the heart of Washington’s North Cascades Mountains, Holden Village is an iconic retreat center that offers visitors a unique opportunity to step into the wilderness to form and renew their relationship with God, the earth, and each other. Over the course of more than 60 years, Holden Village has been transformed from a copper mining town to a vibrant place of education, programming, and worship where everyone is welcome and embraced and invited into deepening renewal.*