

Beat: News

Police helicopter crashes in Atlanta, killing 2 officers

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USPA News - An Atlanta police helicopter assisting in the search for a missing 9-year-old boy crashed in the city's northwest on late Saturday evening, killing the two police officers on board, officials said on Sunday. The missing child was later found safely.

The accident happened at around 10:30 p.m. local time on Saturday when a helicopter from the Atlanta Police Department's (APD) Air Unit lost control and crashed to the ground near Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in northwest Atlanta. The aircraft was carrying 48-year-old Officer Richard J. Halford of Lithia Springs and 40-year-old Officer Shawn A. Smiley of Lithonia. The police helicopter had responded to the area to assist in the search for a 9-year-old boy who had been reported missing about 90 minutes earlier. It was not immediately known what caused the accident, but both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) have launched an investigation. "Our hearts and prayers are with the families of Officer Shawn Smiley and Officer Richard Halford on this difficult day in the City of Atlanta," said Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed. "The entire city stands with the families and the Atlanta Police Department during this time of grief." Halford, who is survived by his ex-wife and a 21-year-old daughter, joined the Atlanta Police Department in May 1986 and later became a pilot in the Air Unit, where he served more than sixteen years. Smiley, survived by his wife and three children aged 5, 7, and 9, had been with the Atlanta Police Department since October 2010 and joined the Air Unit earlier this year. "Officer Richard Halford and Officer Shawn Smiley died honorably, serving our citizens and our police force," Police Chief George Turner said. "Every day, they provided air support for our officers, assisting in major events and searches for suspects and missing persons. Their value to our citizens and our officers on the street is incalculable. Last night they made the ultimate sacrifice in those endeavors."

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