

By Paola Baker

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HELENDALE — Saturday was supposed to be a night to remember for Rebecca Raymond and Brian White.

The couple was celebrating their anniversary in the Big Bear Lake area and rented a small plane to fly there. Debbie Payne, a friend of the couple, said White proposed to Raymond that day, according to KABC-TV.

But the weekend turned tragic when Raymond and White were killed when the plane, a Cessna 172 Skyhawk, crashed near Big Bear Mountain on Saturday. Raymond and White were found the following day, according to a statement from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

"It's a tragic and sad day for all of us," sheriff's officials said. "May God watch over her parents."

Raymond, 28, had been a San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputy since September, assigned to the department's Barstow Station.

"We are heartbroken — she was part of our family here," Barstow Sheriff's Station Capt. Manny Mendoza told the Daily Press. He described Raymond as a "people person," who grew up in Barstow and strived to make a difference in her community.

"She was a great young deputy sheriff," Mendoza said. "She was on the right track. It's just so tragic. It's hard to find the words."

Mendoza said he briefly met White, 30, last year at the department's Christmas party, when he accompanied Raymond. White was a helicopter maintenance test pilot for the U.S. Army, stationed at the National Training Center (NTC) in Fort Irwin, according to a statement from their public affairs office.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with Brian and Rebecca's families following this tragic news. Brian was a great officer, pilot and friend with an amazing work ethic and positive attitude," Lt. Col. Erik Vanek, commander of White's battalion, said.

“His presence will be truly missed by every member of the Raptor family and NTC.”

A helicopter crew had been looking for the pair after authorities received a call Saturday that they didn't reach their destination at Apple Valley Airport. The plane crashed under unknown circumstances, FAA officials said.

The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) are still investigating the crash. Terry Williams, spokesman with the NTSB, told the Daily Press investigators were working all day at the scene of the crash Monday.

“The fact gathering stage of the investigation is still in the very early stages,” Williams said. A preliminary report is expected later this week.

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