



# Huntington Beach Police Department

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Eric Parra, Chief of Police

## Press Release

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## Huntington Beach Police Helicopter Crashes off Newport Beach, Resulting in the Death of Officer Nicholas Vella

On Saturday, February 20, 2022, the Huntington Beach Police Department helicopter, HB-1, crashed into the waters off Newport Beach with two officers onboard, resulting in the death of one officer and injuries to the other. Officer Nicholas Vella, 44-years-old, was pronounced deceased

HB-1 was responding to assist the Newport Beach Police Department with a priority call of a fight in progress near 18th Street and Balboa Boulevard at approximately 6:25 p.m. Just after 6:30 p.m., HB-1 crashed into the water near Newport Beach. Two pilots were onboard, both officers with the Huntington Beach Police Department, at the time of the crash. Multiple civilians, along with public safety personnel, jumped into the water to rescue the officers. Both officers were pulled from the helicopter and transported to area hospitals.

The first officer, a 50-year old man and a 16-year veteran of the department, was transported and is currently in stable condition.

The second officer, 44-year old Nicholas Vella, succumbed to his injuries. Officer Vella is a 14-year veteran of the Huntington Beach Police Department. He leaves behind his wife and daughter.

“There are no words that can express this loss adequately,” said Huntington Beach Chief of Police, Eric Parra. “We are deeply grieving for Officer Vella’s family, and as a police department, we grieve as well.”

The investigation into the cause for the crash is being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board and the Orange County Sheriff’s Department, Major Accident Reconstruction Team.