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July 1, 2008 - 7:34PM

Tempe police dog dies in line of duty

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[John Leptich](#), Tribune

Baloo, a member of the Tempe Police Department canine unit, died Tuesday from a broken spine and other injuries suffered during a fall in the line of duty.

Baloo, who had been with the department since November 2004, died a day after falling from a condominium roof while searching for two men police believe broke into a fenced construction site.

The 5-year-old German shepherd and his handler, officer John Holdinsky, responded to a suspicious activity call at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Farmer Street Lofts Project, 450 S. Farmer Ave. Police were told the men might be hiding inside the building; police thought they might have been trying to steal copper.

Holdinsky and Baloo were on top of a new condominium when the dog didn't navigate the roof correctly, according to Brandon Banks, a Tempe police spokesman.

Banks added that Baloo fell approximately 40 feet and was rushed to Chandler Animal Hospital, where he was treated for injuries and died at 2:15 a.m. Tuesday. Banks said police found Baloo on his stomach, paralyzed with a broken spine and likely internal bleeding and broken bones.

"Not only was this a pet, but a partner," Banks said. "It's always hard."

Holdinsky has served the Tempe Police Department for 22 years. Baloo was a patrol-trained and narcotics-trained police dog. He cost the department \$6,500 in 2004, according to police officials. His training, along with that of his handler, cost an additional \$20,000, police said.

Police didn't find the men they think broke into the site.

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