# [***Pilots Hurt in Crash Summon Help With Cell Phones; Fliers Are Rescued From Mountainside***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KR-96Y0-0093-G13W-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Student pilot Jay Watkins and his instructor, Philip White, were flying through the pitch-black night over Beaver County on Wednesday when their small plane hit the top of a ridge, flipped on its roof and slid down a steep, snow-covered slope. It came to a rest after hitting trees.

Watkins, a Utah Highway Patrol trooper, used his ***cell phone*** to call the emergency services dispatcher in Beaver County at about 10 p.m. He reported that he and White were seriously injured and pinned in the Jeppesen 2000 single-engine plane.

"That ***cell phone*** saved their lives," said Les Whitney, the fire chief who led the rescue. The crash happened in the western area of the county in southwestern Utah, a landscape of jagged, rocky mountain ranges separated by wide desert valleys.

Whitney said Watkins, 28, of Woods Cross, and White, 25, of South Salt Lake, were flying from Cedar City in Iron County to Delta, about 130 miles to the north in Millard County.

For an unknown reason, an electronic locater transmitter on board the aircraft designed to activate in a crash to aid rescuers was not working.

Watkins told dispatchers he thought they had just passed over Minersville, flying northeast, before the crash. He described the area they were in as steep, rocky and snow-covered, indicating they were high on a mountain.

Whitney set up a command post at an automobile wrecking yard north of Minersville on state Route 21. About 45 search and rescue volunteers from Minersville and Milford joined members of the sheriff's office and UHP in a ground search, over dirt roads snaking up canyons east of the highway.

Whitney said the two men told rescuers they could hear aircraft overhead, but Whitney said several other planes in the sky using the Milford airport made it impossible to tell if they were hearing the Civil Air Patrol aircraft from Cedar City taking part in the search.

The crash site was finally located by a Utah Department of Public Safety helicopter dispatched from Salt Lake City and outfitted with heat-sensitive visual devices and a powerful spotlight. The helicopter dropped two emergency medical technicians near the scene and they hiked to the plane, reaching the injured men at about 1 a.m. Thursday. Temperatures at the time were near zero.

The helicopter also ferried a crew with chain saws to the top of the ridge -- at an elevation of more than 8,000 feet -- to clear a landing pad among scrubby mahogany trees for medical helicopters from LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City and McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden.

Rescuers on the ridge top set up ropes lines to hoist Watkins and White up. By 5:45 a.m., the injured men had been loaded onto the helicopters; both were taken to LDS Hospital.

The men were listed in serious condition Thursday night, suffering bone fractures and frostbite, said hospital spokesman Richard Nash.

Sgt. David Mott, investigating the crash for the Beaver County Sheriff's Office, said the impact tore the plane apart and the smell of fuel hung in the air.

Watkins was piloting the aircraft, Mott said, and thought he was flying at 8,500 feet when the side of the mountain appeared. "But it was too late."

He said the cold temperatures may have helped the men survive by slowing the loss of blood from their wounds. It also was fortunate that the plane came to rest high enough on the north side of the ridge that the ***cell phones*** worked.

"If they had been down lower in the canyon, or not facing some towers, their phones would not have worked," he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration has been contacted about the crash, Mott said.

Dispatcher Jared Bridge said Watkins and White each had a ***cell phone*** and would talk in spurts, then turn the phones off to conserve battery power. Bridge said he and correctional officer Brady Davids who also talked to the men, reassured them that help was on the way.

"They were really good on the phone," said Bridge. "They explained their injuries to us and we tried to see if they could identify a major landmark."

"It was an excellent effort by everyone involved," Whitney said.

"But the bottom line is, without a phone, they would have died."

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