

## Cop's death blamed on cleaning supply fumes sprayed at station



Every day he worked as a Chicago Police Department tactical officer, Kevin Robinson risked serious injury or death. But it wasn't a drug dealer's gun or a fatal car chase that claimed the 42-year-old's life, the Cook County Medical Examiner says — it was cleaning chemicals sprayed from a janitor's aerosol at the Morgan Park District police station.

Officer Robinson, a proud 15-year veteran and father-of-two who wore "a Kool-Aid smile wherever he went," inhaled fumes from the cleaning product during morning roll call on Pulaski Day, March 7, his partner Officer Curtis Smith said. A day later, Robinson was hospitalized with breathing problems. And on April 4, he died.

The medical examiner Tuesday released an autopsy report which was finally completed last month, ruling Robinson died of lung disease caused by "inhalation of noxious fumes." The police department and the Illinois Department of Labor are investigating, but have so far refused to identify the cleaning product or the contractor involved.

"It's not something you can fathom," said Smith, who is pushing for the department to treat the death as "in the line of duty," so that Robinson's children Cidney, 15, and Kyle, 13, and ex-wife Camille are provided for. "In this job you're always thinking of the crazy people and things that can happen to you, but not this ... he was so young."

For years until the March 7 incident, janitors routinely sprayed cleaning chemicals in the roll call room during roll call at the Morgan Park station, Smith said. Until Robinson took ill in, nobody had complained of suffering as a result, he added. No other officers have complained of suffering any symptoms since, Chicago Police spokeswoman Sarah Hamilton said.

But later on March 7, Robinson told his partner, "They shouldn't be spraying when we are in there," Smith said. Though the autopsy report notes that Robinson suffered from asthma as a child, his mother said he did not smoke and had no previous health problems that suggested he was at increased risk from exposure to any products.

Hooked up to a ventilator, unconscious and unable to speak for much of his final month, he gave his friends and family brief hope when he was able to squeeze his partner's and his mother's hands the Sunday before he died. Seretha Robinson, who was widowed three years ago and had no other children, said Robinson was "the light of my life," and that her son was always at her Matteson home to do "the man stuff," such as mowing the lawn or making repairs since her husband passed away.

Smith has been helping her cope in the months since she lost her son. "I'm so glad I have Curtis — he's here for me all the time," she said through tears Wednesday. "You don't expect to bury your kids, you expect them to bury you." She said she wants a thorough investigation "so that nobody else has to go through this," and for the city to provide for her son's family.

Fraternal Order of Police spokesman Pat Camden said the union was closely monitoring the investigation to make sure the family gets what it's entitled to.

Ald. Matthew O'Shea (19th), whose ward is home to the Morgan Park police district and many police officers, said that should be the same as the family of an officer who was fatally shot would receive. "He was at work when this happened," O'Shea said. "He died in the line of duty."

Contributing: Frank Main. Chicago Sun Times Article Sept 22, 2011

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