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The Palm Beach Post

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Updated: 2:35 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, 2013 | Posted: 2:35 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Toddler struck, killed by vehicle in Fla. Keys

The Associated Press

KEY LARGO, Fla. — A 2-year-old boy who somehow got out of his Key Largo home in the middle of the night was hit and killed by a vehicle at the 99 mile marker of Highway U.S. One, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office reported Tuesday.

The parents of Austen Mark Alward called the sheriff's office just after midnight Tuesday to report they had been searching for their son and could not find him, according to a release from the agency. They told responding deputies they had been looking for him for about 30 minutes after realizing he was missing from their home.

All available deputies responded, along with Florida Highway Patrol troopers and Customs and Border Protection officers who were in the area and heard the call, the sheriff's office reported. Officers and family members searched the home and surrounding area for about 20 minutes before the child was found. He had been hit by a car on the southbound side of the highway and was in the median.

Key Largo Fire Rescue units were also on their way to help search when he was found. They transported the boy to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Officials issued a notice to be on the lookout for any vehicle headed southbound with front end damage, the sheriff's office reported. A deputy stopped a car at the 23 mile marker of the highway just before 1 a.m. The driver said he thought he may have hit something at the 99 mile marker of the highway. The Florida Highway Patrol is conducting the accident investigation.

Detectives from the Sheriff's Major Crimes Unit responded will be reviewing the circumstances of the case. The driver's name wasn't released, and no charges were immediately reported.

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