

Heaviest Snow In 15 Years Hits Florida

By The Associated Press

The kids enjoyed Florida's heaviest snowfall in 15 years but motorists unused to coping with icy driving conditions were less than happy and in Pensacola thousands of families shivered as power lines were cut by ice-covered tree limbs.

The Florida Highway Patrol reported one traffic death due to an icy bridge and said three other bridges in the Panhandle were closed to motorists Saturday because of hazardous conditions.

Snowflakes were reported as far south as Hudson on the Gulf Coast ten miles south of New Port Richey and as far east as Jacksonville.

Tallahassee residents awoke Saturday to snow as deep as an inch on some places.

The National Weather Service said 1-2 inches of the fluffy white stuff fell in Escambia County, the heaviest reported in Florida since Feb. 14, 1958, when 2-3 inches fell in the same area.

"I've never seen anything like it," said one Tallahassee resident after she peeked out her back window. "I have more than an inch of snow in my backyard and big flakes are still falling."

It was Florida's second snowfall of the year.

"Being a south Alabama boy this is the first time for me," said Charles Lambert of Pensacola. "It's sort of like a holiday around here. It's the first time my three boys have seen snow and they think it's great, too."

In Hudson, Hap Wilson, dispatcher for the Hudson Volunteer Fire Department, said the snowflakes melted before reaching the ground. He said about a dozen children were "going crazy trying to catch the snowflakes before they hit the ground."

A spokesman for the Gulf Power Co. in Pensacola said about 8,000 homes were without power shortly after midnight Saturday when falling ice-laden tree limbs and snow cut lines.

Extra crews were called in from four towns to restore service, the spokesman said.

Richard Perkins, 36, of Birmingham, Ala., was killed Friday night in a two-car crash on an icy bridge on State Road 85 in Shalimar, the Patrol said. Troopers said the two vehicles slid on the slick pavement.

The Patrol closed the Chattahoochee River and Apalachicola River bridges on U.S. 90 and the Highway 98 bridge between Pensacola and Gulf Breeze because of icy conditions, Saturday.