KENNER, La. (AP) -- Larry Winn was in his backyard with his four children Friday when he looked up into the rain and saw the Pan American World Airways jetliner clip some trees.

"It looked like he was going to land and then it sounded like he was trying to get altitude," said Winn.

Flight 759, which originated in Miami and was to go on to San Diego after stopping in New Orleans and then Las Vegas, never gained altitude. It barrelled and bounced into at least eight homes. Its fuselage broke into metal missiles that were flung into other homes and onto lawns like a washing machine spewing out water and rags.

Federal Aviation Administration officials said 136 passengers and seven crew members aboard the Boeing 727 were killed. Officials said at least three people on the ground were killed.

"It was like a big vacuum cleaner went through," said Victor Dean, a Pan Am employee who lives six houses from the point where the jet hit.

Dean said the impact demolished a neighbor's house and it looked like he was going to land and then it sounded like he was trying to get altitude," said Winn.

Flown through the rain, the plane hit some trees near a busy Williams Boulevard and continued on, hitting more tree tops. Then it clipped two houses at the intersection of 17th and Fairway streets, setting them aflame. It skidded and bounced for three blocks, with most of the fuselage finally ending about three blocks away at 17th and Taylor streets.

A large section of the fuselage with part of a wing still attached to it and the blue and white Pan Am insignia visible ended on top of a maroon station wagon turned black by flames.

The plane left a black path about 100 to 150 feet wide and three blocks long.

"As soon as it went down, my son-in-law ran down there ... it burst into flames and people were screaming and everything else. It was unbearable, the way they were screaming," said witness Normand "Rock" Sheeren.

"It's pretty nasty," said Greg Hill, 19, who works for a local funeral home.