“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 Boeing 727 hit.

Dean said the impact demolished a neighbor’s house, “and it doesn’t look as if there was ever a house there.” He said the owner had used his telephone and reported his wife and three young children had been inside.

Eight Treated

Eight people were treated at East Jefferson General Hospital in Metairie for injuries sustained on the ground, said spokeswoman Jacqueline Leonhard.

A 33-year-old mother was in serious condition, her daughter and another girl were in serious condition, Ms. Leonhard said. Two men were treated for smoke inhalation, and a man and a woman were admitted with unknown injuries.

An eighth victim at the hospital was Melissa Trahan, an infant in diapers and rubber pants found shortly after the crash under smouldering debris in a destroyed house. Her feet were burned.

Kenner Mayor Aaron Broussard appealed to doctors with experience in treating burns to come to the crash scene. A Delta Air Lines hangar at New Orleans International Airport was being used as a morgue.

In Washington, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Fred Farrar said the plane went down about 2 miles from the New Orleans airport about 2 minutes after takeoff.

Associated Press reporter Kevin Noblet said sections of the aircraft were scattered over a seven-block area, with a 40-foot section of the fuselage resting atop a destroyed home. Part of the fuselage also came to rest on top of a station wagon.

It was raining at the time of the crash, and a heavy thunderstorm was passing over the area. The airport is located in Kenner, a New Orleans suburb.

The plane crashed at 4:10 p.m. CDT, according to Carol Federico, who lives in the crash area.

Body Storage

Residents were asked to open garages for temporary storage of bodies, said witness Normand “Rock” Sheeren.

“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.”

Authorities cordoned off several blocks around the scene, and were evacuating homes and pushing back spectators. They said they were concerned that tanks of liquid fuel from the plane might explode.

Eight people were treated at East Jefferson General Hospital in Metairie for Kenner fire department, said the debris covered a four- to six-block area. “We can see it from the windows, we can hear explosions,” Ms. Smith said, adding that the area was covered by black smoke.

Smoke was still thick around the fuselage of the plane nearly 90 minutes after the crash. Twisted plane parts, chairs and telephone poles were scattered over the crash site.

The National Transportation Safety Board dispatched its on-duty “go” team to investigate the crash.

“It sounded like a tornado going over and my dishes fell down,” said Mrs. Fay Meyer, who lives a block from the crash scene. “It clipped off part of my palm tree.”

When the plane came over, I was standing right in the back door and it hit my tree. Then it hit the wires, big cables on top of the electrical wires and then she came nose right on down into the next street,” said Sheeren.

On Jan. 11, an Air Florida Boeing 727 crashed into the 14th Street Bridge over the Potomac River after takeoff from Washington’s National Airport in a snowstorm.

Seventy-eight people were killed, four of them motorists on the bridge. Five people aboard the plane survived.

The Air Florida accident was the first major plane crash in the United States in 36 months. Ten days later, a World Airways DC-10 slid off a runway into Boston Harbor in a crash that killed two people.

The Boeing 727, introduced in 1964, is the most widely used commercial airliner in the world. More than 1,700 are in service.

In May 1979, an American Airlines DC-10 crashed at Chicago’s O’Hare airport, killing 273 people, in the nation’s worst air disaster.