No Hard Evidence Found
On Cause Of Kenner Crash

(continued from page 1)

The bodies were stacked in refrigerated trucks at the airport, where coroners, dental-records analysts, pathologists and others began matching names with the remains.

"The coroner's office has advised it has 19 identified bodies. They have another 89 unidentified bodies. There also are, in various places, 95 unattached body parts," said a sheriff's spokeswoman.

Mrs. Goldman would not describe the crash and would not say whether the jet crashed nose first or cartwheeled as marks along the path suggest.

"It's almost indescribable when you see something of this magnitude," she said during a tour of the crash site.

The plane's two armored flight recorder boxes were pulled from the scattered wreckage Saturday afternoon. The boxes contain tape recordings of cockpit conversations and flight information from the plane's instruments which may be vital to learning the cause of the crash, said NTSB spokesman Brad Dunbar.

"The flight data recorder is charred on the outside," Dunbar said, "but it, like the cockpit voice recorder, is designed to withstand tremendous heat. We're optimistic we can read them both out. They're on their way to Washington. They'll be opened this evening, I'm sure."

Betty Scott of the NTSB in Washington said a transcript would be made available after the investigation, but that probably will be at least two months.

Serves As Morgue

Another hangar at the airport served as a morgue for the victims of Pan American World Airways Flight 759, which originated in Miami and was bound for Las Vegas, Nev., and San Diego after its stop in New Orleans.

The jetliner took off while rain fell at the airport and lightning flashed in the area. Eight minutes before the 4:11 p.m. crash, the control tower reported wind at 16 mph gusting to 22 mph, and visibility at four miles. Officials said it is up to the pilot to decide whether to take off in poor weather; an automatic cockpit voice recorder may show whether the pilot and co-pilot discussed the weather.

All 145 people aboard the aircraft, including 47 foreigners, were killed, Pan Am officials said.

Kenner Police public information officer Ruth Barnett said eight people on the ground also were known to have been killed, including 6-year-old Lisa Baye, who died in a hospital early Saturday of injuries from the crash.

A Red Cross survey showed 11 homes destroyed, two others with serious damage and 11 with minor damage.

"The reason we did not have more killed was that most of them were working — both man and wife," she said. Also, she said many children were at a nearby playground out of the plane's path.

Gov. Dave Treen flew by helicopter from Baton Rouge to the crash scene and declared it a disaster area. He called in National Guard troops to help residents whose homes were ravaged.

Identification of the bodies began officially Saturday.

"There's a real problem with bits and pieces. There are lots of those, and it kind of seems like some might never be positively identified," said an Orleans Parish coroner's employee who asked not to be identified.

"About Last Thing"

Although witnesses said the plane appeared to have been hit by lightning just before the crash, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ira Furman said lightning was "about the last thing you look for" as the cause of a plane crash.

Air traffic controller Allen Oehler, who has 26 years of experience but was off duty at the time of the crash, said the storm may have generated "wind shear," abrupt and violent shifts in air currents.

FAA officials said bad weather is not seen as a reason to close an airport, an action only taken when runways are obstructed, such as by snow.

"In most cases, the pilot just declines to take off or make an approach through bad weather," said FAA official Earl Wolfe. "We do have minimum conditions for approach to a runway and for takeoffs, but it's still a pilot's decision."

Wisps of acrid smoke continued to rise Saturday as eight five-man teams of volunteers, each with a doctor, picked through the wreckage. Many wore surgical masks.

The one bright spot in the search was the recovery Friday of an 18-month-old girl, Melissa Trahan, who was reported in stable condition. She was pulled from the rubble of a home ruined in the crash.

Four others on the ground when the crash occurred were seriously injured. Two were listed in critical condition with burns over 80 percent of their bodies.