KENNER, La. (AP) - The Eastern Flight 911 was just 2,915 pounds under the maximum allowable takeoff weight, "just barely legal," under Federal Aviation Administration rules, Johnson, an accident investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, said Friday.

They were right on the edge, but they were still legal, Johnson said. "That didn't allow for any margin of error," he said.

In fact, a witness told me they were unaware of being so low until they talked with an airport air traffic controller shortly after takeoff.

Johnson said he checked into why the plane used the 7,000-foot north-south runway, rather than the 9,226-foot east-west runway, Thursday.

Capt. Andrew Krog, was at the controls of Flight 911, which carried 112 people from New Orleans to Cancun, Mexico. The other members of the cockpit crew were First Officer John S. Lloyd, and Robert W. Near, the flight engineer. All are based in New York.

"That's the runways we always use," Johnson said.

The pilot seemed to think he had a couple of thousand feet of runway left when his nosewheel lifted off the runway, "and maybe a thousand feet when he lifted off," Johnson said.

He doesn't remember looking down at the road (Airline Highway) as he passed over, but he seems to think he was a lot higher than our witness says he was at the time," Johnson said.

An Eastern Airlines spokesman said the pilots were grounded as a routine procedure pending the NTSB interview.

A Pan Am jetliner clipped treetops and crashed in a Kenner neighborhood July 9, 1982, killing all 146 people aboard and eight on the ground. The NTSB said the Pan Am plane, the same Boeing 272 as involved in Monday's flight, ran into a windshear during a severe thunderstorm on takeoff from the airport.