



AN ENGINE from the DC-10 is one of the larger pieces of debris remaining after the crash near a trailer court. (Sun-Times Photo by Jim Frost)

270 killed in O'Hare jet crash

By Hugh Hough

The deadliest air crash in U.S. history claimed at least 270 lives Friday on the fringe of O'Hare Airport.

An American Airlines jet—with 257 passengers and 13 crew members aboard—plunged to the ground about half a mile northwest of O'Hare Runway 14 Left, where an engine had fallen from the plane's left wing on takeoff.

The airline said all aboard were killed.

In addition, the owner of a construction firm with a garage near the crash site said one of his truck drivers was missing and presumed dead. That would bring the toll to 271.

Occupants of the DC-10, en route to Los Angeles on a nonstop flight, never had a chance. The big plane disintegrated on impact in a grassy area near a trailer court at 101 W. Touhy in Des Plaines.

Some witnesses said the plane exploded on impact and that a sheet of flame from burning jet fuel briefly blazed over the torn bodies and metal.

Most of those on the ground in the vicinity of the crash site were more fortunate than the airborne. Except for the truck driver presumed dead, there appeared to be only two ground casualties serious enough for hospitalization. Those victims were believed to have been in the same garage as the truck driver. The garage was demolished.

Among those on the incomplete passenger list released by the airline were author Judith Wax, executives of Playboy magazine and the son of publisher Henry Regnery—all en route to a bookshellers convention.

AT LEAST 42 VICTIMS were from the Chicago area, according to the list. And the number may be higher as all of the addresses of the victims become known. Most were listed as California residents.

Hours after the smoke had cleared from

A partial list of victims; Page 9.

the gruesome preholiday-weekend crash, the key question remained unanswered: Why did flight 191 go down?

Experts said the DC-10 has the capability of flying on two engines if one of the three loses power. The General Electric engines are so powerful, they said, that the plane could even take off with only two engines operating.

But the situation changes dramatically if one of the engines falls off the plane, they said. The weight distribution, the aerodynamics—in short, the "entire controllability" of the plane—changes, one safety expert said.

The National Transportation Safety Board sent a team of 15 experts to Chicago in an effort to solve the mystery of the midafternoon crash that almost doubled the previous worst toll in U.S. aviation history—the 144 people killed Sept. 25 as a result of a midair collision over San Diego, Calif., between a Pacific Southwest Airlines Boeing 707 and Cessna 172.

AN INITIAL EXAMINATION of the communications between the jet's pilot and the



CAPT. WALTER LUX, pilot of the airliner that crashed Friday near O'Hare Airport.

O'Hare control tower pinpointed nothing but the sudden occurrence of a dire emergency aboard the aircraft, said Neal Callahan, regional director of the Federal Aviation Administration.

At the time the communications sounded "absolutely normal" initially.

Because of the clearness of the day, the controller was able to visually monitor

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The Sun-Times' coverage team

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