

Fire at a Furniture Warehouse Kills Nine Firefighters

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Yesterday night (Monday, at about 7 pm local time), in Charleston, SC, US, fire swept through a furniture warehouse, collapsing its roof and killing nine firefighters inside - the US's deadliest single disaster for fire fighters since the Sept. 11 2001 terror attacks. The fire, which was not thought to be arson, at least in preliminary reports, burned the furniture present in the warehouse, starting in a storage area, and very rapidly (probably less than 5 minutes) swept through the entire building. It soon caused the collapse of the roof and caved in on fire fighters as they were searching inside for store employees and trying to extinguish. Men were seen jumping out of windows and trying to break through glass to escape the building as the front of the store collapsed. Before the collapse, it appears that two employees in the building were rescued. One was rescued quickly, and fire fighters punched a hole through a wall of the warehouse to reach the other one. It is likely that there were no functioning sprinklers in the building.

Further details on this fire will be discussed in the July 2007 Fire safety & Technology Bulletin.