Randall E. Carpenter
Coos Bay Fire and Rescue
Year of Death: 2002

Coos Bay Fire and Rescue was dispatched to the report of a fire in a building that contained a truck and auto supply store and a machine shop. The fire was first discovered by building occupants who smelled smoke and discovered warm walls and fire behind the wall in an upstairs bathroom. The occupants attempted to fight the fire prior to calling the fire department. When firefighters arrived on the scene, they reported a light smoke condition. Firefighters advanced 2 attack lines into the building. Lieutenant Carpenter, Firefighter Common, and Firefighter Hanners were working on the second floor of the building.

Finding no visible fire, the firefighters opened up the walls and ceiling to expose and extinguish the fire. When the fire hidden in these concealed spaces was exposed to fresh air, it progressed rapidly. Firefighters on the roof reported that the roof was feeling spongy, and the IC ordered an evacuation of the building. At approximately the same time, the roof and other structural supports over the second floor collapsed. Fire spread rapidly throughout the building.

Lieutenant Carpenter and Firefighter Common were trapped under the debris on the second floor. Firefighter Hanners, who may have been descending the stairs at the time of the collapse, was propelled down the stairs by the force of the collapse and ended up behind a customer service counter. A personnel accountability report found that 3 firefighters were missing. Other firefighters advanced attack lines into the building to search for the trapped firefighters. Firefighter Hanners was discovered and removed from the building. Due to fire conditions and structural instability, firefighters were unable to reach Lieutenant Carpenter and Firefighter Common until the fire was controlled. All 3 firefighters died of asphyxiation and exposure to heat and smoke.