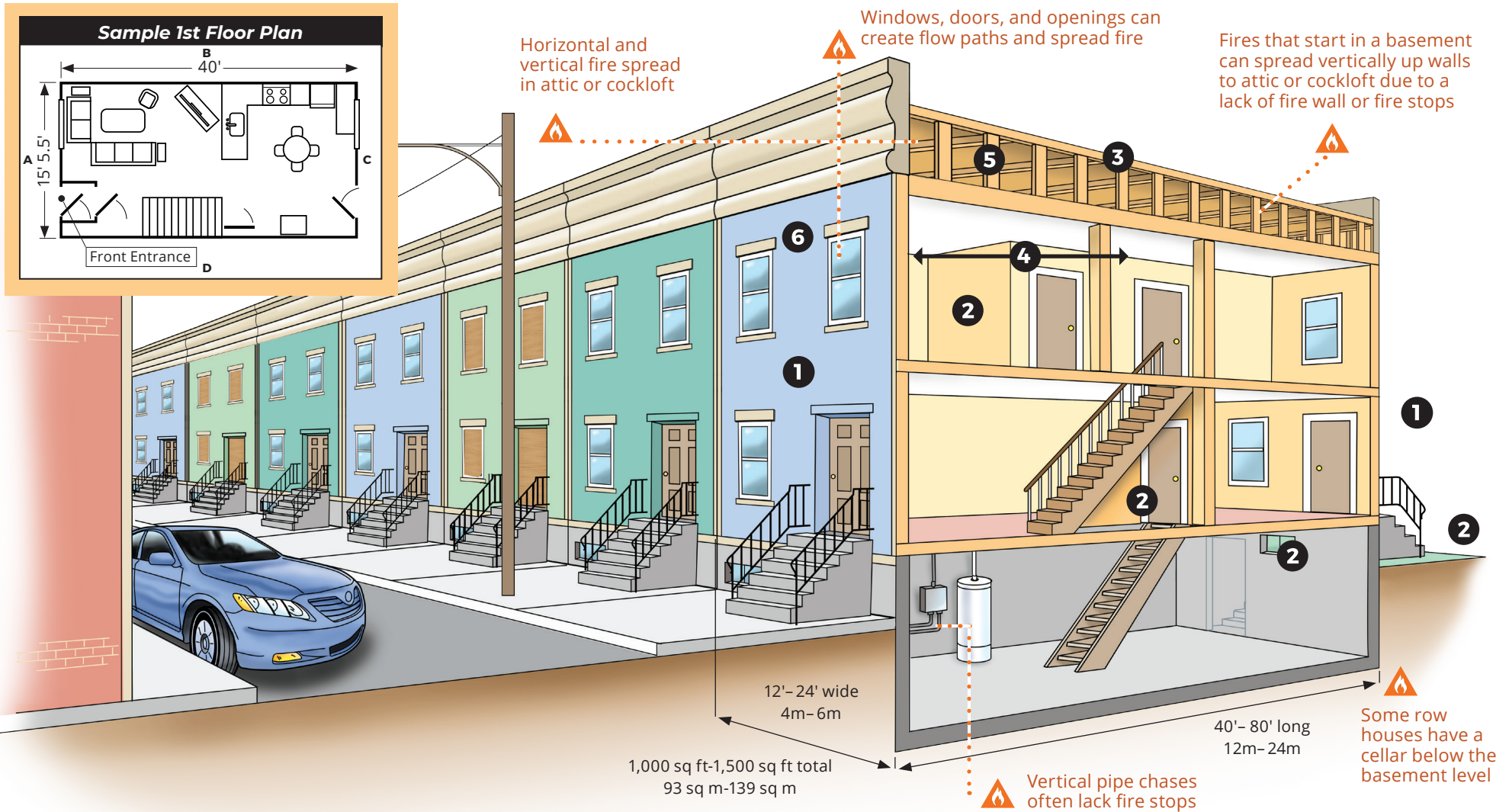




ROW HOUSE FIREFIGHTING TACTICS



FIREFIGHTERS STAY SAFE FOLLOW THESE 6 TACTICS

- 1** If interior unit, size-up Sides A and C; locate fire and extent; send resources to Side C
- 2** Hoseline deployment:
 - Fight fire on the level of the fire (exterior attack may be most effective initially)
 - Protect search
 - Basement window or door
 - Side C through alley or adjoining house
 - Backup hoseline ready
 - Use cellar nozzle to get water into below grade areas
 - Use piercing or cockloft nozzle to get water into void spaces
- 3** Coordinate ventilation with fire attack
- 4** Send resources inside to Exposure B and D
- 5** Send resources and charged hoseline to attic or cockloft to check for extension
- 6** Position ground ladders to all upper floor windows; use caution around utility wires

Note: Numbered tactics are not prioritized.

ROW HOUSE INFO & FEATURES

A TYPICAL ROW HOUSE



Photo courtesy of Christopher Naum

- ▶ 1 to 4 story residential house with a basement or cellar
- ▶ Constructed in a row, often running the length of a block with 30–45 occupancies
- ▶ Potentially occupied by multiple people
- ▶ Attached to houses on both sides, with separating fire wall
- ▶ Located on a narrow street
- ▶ Accessible only from a front and rear door

TYPICAL FEATURES

▶ EXTERIOR ROW HOUSE

- NARROW WINDOWS**
- FRONT STOOP (STEPS)**
leads to street
- 2ND & 3RD FLOOR 'BAY'**
3 or more windows that extend from the structure
- ORNATE CORNICES**
- SINGLE SLOPING ROOF**
modest ornate wood or brick cornice

▶ INTERIOR ROW HOUSE

- SINGLE RUN, STEEP STAIRS**
- LONG, NARROW HALLWAYS**
- WALKOUT BASEMENT**
- BASEMENT and/or CELLAR**
used for storage
- CELLAR**
only accessible from the basement

▶ CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS

- BALLOON**
frame construction
- BUILDING PERIOD**
late 1800s to early 1900s
- BRICK EXTERIOR WALLS**
- SOLID WOOD BEAM**
floor joists and roof rafters
- PLASTER and LATH**
over wood framing
- TYPE III CONSTRUCTION**



Conduct a community risk assessment to understand unique features of row houses in your jurisdiction. Row house modernization efforts may mean the exterior is refaced and interior has a different floor plan. Materials used for modernization or new row house construction may burn more quickly.





"Don't underestimate the danger to firefighters when fighting a row house fire. Access to the rear of the property is a major challenge. Basement and cellar fires in row houses have resulted in many line of duty deaths. You must be diligent and prepare as though you're going to a fire each time you report for duty."

Assistant Chief Harry Bannan
Philadelphia Fire Department, Platoon D

OTHER RESOURCES

NIOSH investigations of deaths involving row house fires:

- [cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face201618.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face201618.html)
- [cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face201425.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face201425.html)
- [cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face201424.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face201424.html)

   Follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter @NIOSH

- UL Firefighter Safety Research Institute video on basement fires:
 - <https://ulfirefightersafety.org/research-projects/understanding-and-fighting-basement-fires.html>

Acknowledgements: Assistant Chief Bannan and the Philadelphia Fire Department for their support with this material.

