**Fires that start in a basement can spread vertically up walls to attic or cockloft due to a lack of fire wall or fire stops.**

**Windows, doors, and openings can create flow paths and spread fire.**

**Fires that start in a basement can spread vertically up walls to attic or cockloft due to a lack of fire wall or fire stops.**

**Vertical pipe chases often lack fire stops.**

**Horizontal and vertical fire spread in attic or cockloft.**

**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

**“Basic skills – quick, proficient hoseline deployment and advancement – aggressive searches. Firefighters must perform these skills effectively when fighting row home fires.”**

Firefighter Vincent DeNisio  
Wilmington, DE Fire Department, Squad 4

---

**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

**Note:** Numbered tactics are not prioritized.

---

**MORE INFORMATION**
[cdc.gov/niosh/fire/](https://cdc.gov/niosh/fire/)

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter @NIOSH

Acknowledgements: Assistant Chief Bannan and the Philadelphia Fire Department and Firefighter DeNisio and the Wilmington, DE Fire Department for their support with this material.

UL Basement Fire Video