

GEAR TEST

Accordion Ladder

New ladder folds up smaller than a suitcase

BY SCOTT COOK

Almost every fire apparatus carries folding ladders, typically 10 footers with solid beams and hinged rungs. It's easier to move these ladders into tight spots, such as scuttle holes, than trying to maneuver a big roof ladder through a narrow hallway or some other cramped area.

Foldable Products of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, has recently introduced a new folding ladder to the fire service called the Quikstep, and this one folds down to about the size of a briefcase. The 10' Quikstep we recently evaluated is a mere

23.5" x 13" x 3" when folded and weighs only 26 lbs.

We easily moved the Quikstep around cluttered areas without banging it into walls, lights or other objects and carried it through stairwells and into elevators with no problems. One of our truckies thought the Quikstep would make a great second ladder to have stored at the tip of the aerial in addition to the 14' roof ladder.

One firefighter can assemble the Quikstep in about five seconds. Just unfold it from its stowed position, fold the beams up to form a C channel and tighten the draw strap.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FOLDABLE PRODUCTS

opening, such as a narrow shaft, to unfold it. The most common comment heard during setup was "that's it?"

The standard Quikstep ladder is available in 4' to 12' lengths (unfolded), and it is 15" wide when assembled. Constructed of aluminum with stainless steel hinge pins, the ladder is rated for 300 lbs. The Quikstep meets applicable OSHA/ANSI and NFPA ladder strength requirements.

Below: To assemble a Quikstep ladder, fold the beams into a "C" and tighten the draw strap.

Below right: A folded Quikstep fits into small compartments.



PROS

- + **Compact**—can go anywhere and be stored anywhere.
- + **Easy to set up**—one firefighter, five seconds.
- + **Versatile**—can be used in many places other ladders may not be able to get too.
- + **Sturdy**—it feels like a ladder

CONS

- **Cost**—at \$400, the Quikstep costs more than twice a typical folding ladder. Then again, it's not a typical folding ladder.