

**West Adams County Fire Protection District (WACFPD)**  
**Volunteer Firefighter Gear in the 1970s & 80s**  
**By Kathy Hobaugh 9-11-2022**

WACFPD volunteer firefighters were issued a helmet, bunker coat, hip boots, gloves, and a Tuffy jacket in the 1970s & 80s. During this time the gear was acquired by rummaging through the big pile of bunker gear in the basement at headquarters (105th & Huron, Northglenn, CO). Different sizes of Tuffy jackets were also available and hanging on the basement clothes rack.

Volunteers received a Plectron fire tone-alert radio too. This type of radio was the first widely used in-home unit in fire services. It was coded so firefighters would receive tones for their perspective Station or switched to “monitor” so that they were able to hear ALL the tones within the district. The radio was just a receiver that directed firefighters to the scene. Once a firefighter left their house, they were unable to receive any other communication until they got on scene or went to the station. A snippet from the letter written to the WACFPD Board of Directors by June Chestnut on Oct 9, 1979 is an excellent illustration of the shortcomings of the emergency communication systems of the day.<sup>1</sup> (the entire letter is on Page 4)

*“I have never been so upset with the operation of our fire department emergency communication system as I was on the morning of October 8, 1979. On this particular morning my husband responded to a call of an apartment on fire 1 block away. As he left the house but before he could reach his vehicle, the police dispatcher advised her patrolmen of the call. Immediately a patrolman advised his dispatcher of the fact it was the address of a party he had arrested earlier that night and there was a possible danger for emergency personnel as the party had made threatening verbal statements.*

*Before his dispatcher could relay the information to West Adams County Fire dispatcher and she in turn tell all responding units they were not to go into the building until police arrived, my husband was already out of radio contact at the scene.*

#1 Chestnut, June. “Emergency Communications, WACFPD Board of Directors”. *June Chestnut’s Scrapbooks*. 9 Oct 1979.

*The potential was there. There was a 7MM rifle by the couch and several razor-tipped arrows on the coffee table. Granted nothing came of it this time but what about the next time.*

*A volunteer responds from where ever he happens to be and many times is at a scene by himself before police or other fire personnel arrive. At these times he is all alone without a way to communicate. Must someone be needlessly injured or worse, die, because of lack of radio to know all the facts BEFORE, NOT AFTER A Call?"*



**Volunteer Firefighter  
Tom Chestnut**

The article below is what the newspapers reported on the Oct. 8, 1979 apartment fire. However, there was a lot more to the story! The man had been drinking and was passed out by the time my Dad, Tom Chestnut, entered his apartment. Tom carried him out.

Broomfield Enterprise, Volume 5, Number 2, October 11, 1979

## **Fireman rescues man from apartment fire**

Quick action by volunteer fireman Tom Chestnut got a man to safety from a smoke filled apartment early Monday morning.

Firefighters responding to a 6.17 a.m. call Oct. 8 at 2040 E. 10th discovered a smoldering fire in a third floor apartment. Shortly after Chestnut, first on the scene, had helped the lone male occupant from a couch in the apartment the fire burst into open flames.

## 1983 WACFPD Gear Volunteer Firefighter Ed Hobaugh

helmet, bunker  
coat, bunker pants,  
gloves, boots



The uniform shirt and  
pants were made from  
polyester material.



Tuffy jacket,  
bunker pants,  
boots



Volunteer  
badge for WACFPD



Hat badge  
for WACFPD



Letter written to the WACFPD Board of Directors  
by June Chestnut on Oct 9, 1979

October 9, 1979

AN OPEN LETER TO WEST ADAMS COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Having been a volunteer fireman's wife for the last 8 years, I have never been so upset with the operation of our fire department emergency communication system as I was on the morning of October 8, 1979. On this particular morning my husband responded to a call of an apartment on fire 1 block away. As he left the house but before he could reach his vehicle, the police dispatcher advised her patrolmen of the call. Immediately a patrolman advised his dispatcher of the fact it was the address of a party he had arrested earlier that night and there was a possible danger for emergency personnel as the party had made threatening verbal statements.

Before his dispatcher could relay the information to West Adams County Fire dispatcher and she in turn tell all responding units they were not to go into the building until police arrived, my husband was already out of radio contact at the scene.

The potential was there. There was a 7MM rifle by the couch and several razor-tipped arrows on the coffee table. Granted nothing came of it this time but what about the next time?

A volunteer responds from where ever he happens to be and many times is at a scene by himself before police or other fire personnel arrive. At these times he is all alone without a way to communicate. Must someone be needlessly injured or worse, die, because of lack of a radio to know all the facts BEFORE, NOT AFTER A CALL?

I attended a board meeting at budget time a year ago and also a meeting last month. At both of these meetings I heard requests for a portable communication system so firemen can be in contact with headquarters and other fire personnel. As yet the only ones in operation are those officers have which are of no use to anyone else until an officer arrives at the scene. Being a fireman is hazardous enough, but I feel lack of proper communication equipment to make the job safer is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY ALONE. I urge you to give their request for better communications system top priority. You cannot begin to imagine the effect of being home listening to the scanner and knowing that my husband had to be already at the scene and could not of possibly heard any of the warnings due to the time factor it took to get the message broadcast until you have been placed in a similar situation. (In no way do I blame the dispatchers for the delay. They released the information as quickly as it became available to them.)

CC: BPD  
LT WEBB





Plectron fire tone-alert radio



In 1984 or 1985 the department went to a portable, receive only Minitor I pager. When carried by firefighters, they were able to hear all radio communications.

