

## Armored Fire Engines of Japan

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Anyone who collected die-cast models in the 1970s was familiar of the Shinsei Mini Power range. They were made in Japan and distributed in the United States under the brand name Cox. The company produced construction and commercial vehicles in scales around 1:80, and a [quartet of fire engines](#) (PDF).

One of the four was a Fuso "chemical fire engine" of peculiar appearance. First, for the front-mounted dual axles, which was common for Japanese fire apparatus of the time. Second, for the armored body style. Looked like the severe version of an airport crash truck. Click to enlarge, including the far right picture, which is my modified version of the model, with red and silver painted details:



Did such a truck actually exist? That was a question that bugged me for decades. Seemed likely, based on the prototypically accuracy of the model range. But where to find a photo? Then the Internet was invented. Then came Google. Then came the first photo found of this truck, which is included in this [Shinsei model fire engine guide](#) (PDF) of mine. (Sorry, can't find a larger version right now.)

Doing another round of Google searching and Japanese language translation (via Google) this morning finds some more images of similar vehicles. As you might expect, they were used for firefighter at refineries or other locations with potential for explosions.

This one was deployed in 1969 and had iron plating around the body that was 1cm in thickness. Photo credit unknown, appears to have appeared in a print magazine or book called Fire Rescue EMS. See [this web page](#). Click to enlarge:



This one was used in the Chiba Prefecture, and introduced in 1972. Built by Isuzu or upon an Isuzu chassis. Photos appear scanned from film prints and are shown on [this web page](#). Click to enlarge:



Here's another photo of the same model of apparatus, from [this web page](#). And the other side of the truck, from a picture on a box of model produced of the truck, from [this web page](#). (Who made the model? What scale? No idea.) Click to enlarge:



Then what happened? How many of these armored fire engines were produced around Japan? Don't have the first idea. How long were such vehicles produced? Based on Google photos of later-era "chemical fire engines," the armored designs were a fad through the 1980s or abouts.

Maybe someone from the other side of the pond will happen upon this page, and add their two cents. (Or more likely, the *real* story that's only hinted at here.) We can translate with Google!

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**What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?**

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