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Title **AT&T Unit Tries To Deliver Message About 'Blue Boxes'**

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Abstract New York Telephone Company demonstrates computer system to detect blue box use in an effort to deter phone fraud. AT&T says they have been using this technology for about a year.

Keywords AT&T; blue box; New York Telephone Company (NYTCo); Bell Telephone Laboratories (BTL); John Whitman (security manager, NYTCo)

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AT&T Unit Tries To Deliver Message About 'Blue Boxes'

Computer Is Said to Help Find Customers Trying to Cheat On Long Distance Costs

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

NEW YORK—New York Telephone Co had a message for customers who are using "blue boxes" to avoid paying for long distance calls—the company has new computer equipment that makes it easier to catch them. But when the time came to demonstrate it, at a news conference attended by about a dozen reporters, the computer was strangely silent

"Blue boxes" are small, lightweight electronic devices that enable a caller to dial into the long distance network without activating the phone company's billing equipment. American Telephone & Telegraph Co., parent of New York Telephone, estimates that it loses between \$5 million and \$10 million annually in long distance revenue because of the blue boxes. The new detecting equipment was developed by Bell Telephone Laboratories Inc., another AT&T unit.

At the news conference, the reporters

gathered around a computer terminal as a telephone company investigator used a blue box to call the weather bureau in London. A voice with a British accent was heard to say, "The temperature at 1 p.m. was one degree centigrade." The computer terminal, which was supposed to type out details of the call instantly, including the phone number of the caller, was silent. "I'm trying to remain calm," said John Whitman, security manager, when asked what was wrong.

A New York Telephone spokesman later

said that the problem was an electrical failure between the main computer and demonstration room. The equipment was back in order after 20 minutes, and reporters got to see the system work.

AT&T, apparently miffed at the attention New York Telephone was getting, said the equipment has been in use for about a year in "areas where the problem is critical." The parent company refused to identify those areas, however, citing "security reasons."

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