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Abstract Robert E. Mawhinney, 38, and Thomas J. Eddings, 33, of Ypsillanti, MI arrested for blue box fraud.

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In The Courts

2 Area Men Admit Having Illegal Telephone Device

BY PAT BAUER
Staff Reporter

Two Ypsilanti-area men pleaded guilty Friday to possession of a so-called "blue box" used for telephone fraud.

Robert E. Mawhinney, 38, and Thomas J. Edings, 33, both of 6800 Crane Road in Pittsfield Township, pleaded guilty when arraigned before 14th District Court Judge Kenneth Bronson.

They had been charged with possession of an instrument or device used to fraudulently avoid lawful charge for telecommunication service.

The so-called "blue box" is a machine which plays high frequency signals of 2600 cycles per second into the phone lines. This enables the user to bypass telephone billing equipment and make free long distance calls.

Prosecutor Al Blixt got a search warrant for the 6800 Crane Road address after an investigation by Detec-

tives Richard Freeman and Kenneth Krauss of the Michigan State Police.

State police had received information from undercover officers in New York that a person at the Crane address had received delivery of a "blue box." The undercover police had been investigating a New York manufacturer of the illegal devices, who has since been charged with fraud.

Police attached a recording device to Mawhinney's telephone line which noted telephone calls accompanied by the high frequency signal.

Blixt said the recorder provided evidence that a substantial number of telephone calls—51 in about two and a half weeks — had been made with the assistance of the "blue box." He said police also believed that the box was also being used at other locations, including pay telephones.

Conviction of telephone fraud can bring a maximum sentence of \$500 fine and one year imprisonment. Sentencing is expected within two to three weeks.