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'Blue Box' Used to Make Toll-Free Calls

The "blue box" allegedly used to make illegal toll-free phone calls from Chester County around the world was developed in a Bell Telephone Co. laboratory, a source close to the county district attorney's office said today.

He said the sophisticated electronics device had been described in a technical magazine published by the company.

The source showed what he said was the most sophisticated model, a blue-black box, two inches long, two inches wide, and three-and-a-half inches high. It contained four rows of three numbered push-buttons each.

The source said the users dialed 800, a toll-free number for many businesses on a conventional home, office or pay-booth phone. As soon as the phone began to ring, he said, the user push-buttoned the area code and phone number he was calling on the illegal device.

This, he said, placed the entire worldwide phone network, including overseas cables and satellites, at the user's disposal, free.

He said the boxes are available — illegally — in many sizes. The prevailing price for the most sophisticated, he said, is \$300 wholesale and \$1,500 retail.

He said the boxes are built of simple materials obtainable in any radio supply store.

He said building, owning, selling or otherwise transferring any such device violates a federal communications law.