



# ***Exploding The Phone***

db806

www.explodingthephone.com

Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title	<b>The Phone Phreak Crackdown</b>
Publication	<i>The Washington Post, Times Herald</i>
Date	1971-11-02
Author(s)	Claiborne, William
V/I/P	p. B2
Abstract	Overview of electronic toll fraud and efforts against it. "Nobody knows for sure who invented the blue box but a group of Harvard and MIT students who were arrested for using one in 1963 are regarded by telephone company officials as at least pioneers in the field."
Keywords	Harvard; MIT; Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone; C&P; Carl Teets; Earl A. Connor; Earl Connor; Joseph Cocipia; Arlene Cocipia; blue box; Abbie Hoffman
Notes	Electronic copy also includes proquest version with nice photo of Teets.
Source	Newspaper Archive

*The following pages may contain copyrighted material. We believe that our use of this material for non-commercial educational and research purposes constitutes "fair use" under Section 107 of U.S. Copyright Law. If you wish to use this material for purposes that go beyond "fair use," you must obtain permission from the copyright owner, if any. While it will make us slightly sad to do so, we will nonetheless comply with requests from copyright owners who want their material removed from our web site.*

# The Phone Phreak Crackdown

By William L. Claiborne Washington Post Staff Writer

The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973); Oct 2, 1971; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Washington Post (1877 - 1990)

pg. B2

# The Phone Phreak Crackdown

By William L. Claiborne  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sophisticated chiselers with pocket-sized electronic "blue boxes" have been taking advantage of the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Co. so frequently lately that a new, concerted crackdown has been ordered by the firm's management.

In the last nine months, according to a C&P security executive, so many tiny beeper devices have been hooked onto private telephones to make free calls that investigators are on the trail of at least a dozen persistent offenders.

The telephone company, so far, remains undaunted by the advice of Chicago Seven defendant Abbie Hoffman, who recently wrote in his book, "Steal This Book," that:

"In our opinion, as long as there is a phone company, and as long as there are outlaws, nobody need ever pay for a call."

The source of the problem, according to Earl A. Connor, staff supervisor of C&P security, is the proliferation of small, cheap "blue boxes" that provide their owners with free calls anywhere in the world.

There is nothing new about "blue boxes," which when attached to an ordinary telephone allow the user to sound combinations of six master

tones that activate telephone switching equipment around the world.

A "blue box" user can dial an information operator anywhere, disconnect her with the flip of a switch, and then sound the right combination of "beeps" to make a toll-free call. Or, he can dial an area code 800 "Enterprise" number, flip a master switch, and then "beep" any number he wants.

Nobody knows for sure who invented the "blue box," but a group of Harvard and MIT students who were arrested for using one in 1963 are regarded by telephone company officials as at least pioneers in the field.

The students, starting by playing woodwind instruments into a telephone receiver to achieve the right "beeps," improved the technique in the first "black box," an automatic device that—when attached to a telephone—allows all incoming calls to be made without charge to the caller.

At the time, telephone security officials regarded the device as a considerable improvement over the 1950 system of recording the sound of nickles, dimes and quarters dropping into a pay phone and then playing the sounds back to the long distance operator.

Since then, the telephone company defrauders—called

"phone phreaks" in the subculture dialect—have claimed as their first hero Joseph Engressia, a 22-year-old blind youth who three years ago became famous at the University of South Florida because he could whistle telephone "beeps" in perfect pitch.

In an interview with Esquire Magazine, Engressia described recently how he is receiving hundreds of calls from all over the country made toll-free by the use of "blue boxes."

C&P executives said yesterday that they have made no estimate of the number of "blue boxes" in use here, or of how much money the company has lost as a result of their use.

One company spokesman did say that the 24 companies in the Bell Telephone System are losing more than \$500,000 annually to the device.

Connor complained that the popularity of the "blue boxes" stems, in part, from widespread publicity about their availability and nearly flawless effectiveness.

C&P officials said the telephone companies are beginning to make inroads into the lucrative free-toll schemes.

Investigations now underway in the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland, a C&P spokesman said, are expected to result in arrests.

On March 19, acting on information supplied by C&P security officials, police arrested a Wheaton couple in their home and seized a "blue box," a telephone company official said.

Joseph Cocipia, 57, and his wife, Arlene, 43, of the 1100 block of Newport Mill Road, were arraigned in Montgomery County People's Court. Cocipia pleaded guilty and was given 12 months probation, while his wife pleaded "no contest" and was fined \$50. The couple was ordered to make restitution.

In Washington, defrauding the telephone company is punishable with a jail sentence of up to five years, and a fine of \$1,000. In Virginia, the offense can carry a 1- to 10-year term and a \$500 fine, and in Maryland it can carry a term of six months and a fine of \$500.

A C&P official said that "blue box" investigations are under way elsewhere in the nation. In one case last month in Billings, Mont., he said a ring of telephone defrauders was broken up and 10 persons arrested.

The C&P official said the company has been investigating "blue box" cases for "at least seven or eight years," but he added, "we're giving it more attention right now because it has been cropping up more and more, recently."

Blocked due to copyright.  
See full page image or  
microfilm.

Carl Teets, headquarters supervisor of security for Bell

Telephone, displays a typical homemade device used

to tap into telephones and make a call for free.