

by Alan R. Bechtold

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CELLULAR FRAUD VERY PREVENTABLE,  
ACCORDING TO AUDIOVOX PRESIDENT  
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(BPS) -- Eighteen people arrested last week in New York on charges of illegally using their cellular telephones would have been unable to commit such a crime had they been using cellular phones from Audiovox Corp., according to John Shalam, president of Audiovox.

The 18 were arrested on charges of illegally altering memory chips in their mobile phones so they could make calls without being charged.

"The sad thing is that this crime is very preventable," Shalam said. "If this type of alteration is attempted on an Audiovox cellular phone, the phone is rendered useless."

According to Louis Antoniou, vice president of Audiovox's mobile electronics division, such tampering is prevented on Audiovox phones by an algorithm built into the software which prevents alteration of the phone's electronic serial number (E.S.N.).

"If someone attempts to change the E.S.N. without using the algorithm, the phone will not activate," Antoniou said. "As far as we know, such prevention against tampering is unique to Audiovox."

Cellular phones have memory chips which contain both a mobile identification number (M.I.N.) and the E.S.N. When a call is made, both the numbers are transmitted to the mobile carrier where a computer checks the validity of the E.S.N. If the number is valid, the call goes through and the cost is charged to a billing number provided by the M.I.N. chip.

By reprogramming the E.S.N., those arrested apparently caused other people to be billed for their calls.

Officials estimate that the fraud cost local mobile telephone companies approximately \$40,000 per month. Nationwide, carriers were losing an estimated \$3 million.

Audiovox Corp., a major supplier of cellular telephones, autosound and auto security products, is located at 150 Marcus Blvd., Hauppauge, NY 11788, (516) 249-3366.

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