Experimental "Drive-In" Coin Telephone

Experimental model of the new "drive-in" telephone. The instrument, housed in a weather-protective hood, is easily accessible to the driver.

Drive-in arrangements are becoming familiar services at libraries, banks and post offices, and now outdoor telephones are also being adapted for use from automobiles. Experimental "drive-in" telephones have been developed at Bell Laboratories and are presently undergoing a field trial to determine customer approval. These phones, mounted on metal stands beside roadways, could provide "road service" for telephone users. Installed along curbs, safety islands and at road-side cut-offs, drive-in coin telephones can supplement the service presently provided by existing outdoor telephone booths installed at convenient locations.

The experimental units consist of three sub-assemblies: a base, a post and a hood. Each is designed with specific service requirements in mind. A concrete block, approximately 2 cubic feet in volume, rigidly supports the post assembly, and extra strong steel pipe with suitable mountings secures the hood assembly. For ease of operation by the customer, the unit is positioned with the dial two-thirds of the way up the average car window opening, a little over four feet above road level. The latest coin telephone – equipped with retractile handset cord and extra weatherproofing – is fastened to a very tough and durable manganese-bronze support plate. A bright-colored plastic hood partially encloses the unit and offers protection from bad weather. Hoods for the trial models were made in green, yellow, orange and blue.

The hood – vacuum formed from a cellulose acetate butyrate material – presents an eye-catching, flexible and translucent assembly. A telephone directory is supported in a square metal box below the instrument. The directory is secured with a ten-foot retractile cord. For night-time use, the "drive-in" telephone is illuminated either by spot lights mounted on adjacent structures or by lights imbedded in the concrete base.

The development of this unit at the Laboratories involved a number of problems in the choice of materials and in structural design for both durability and convenience of use. Prior to the field trial, preliminary tests, including exposure to weather, were conducted at the Laboratories to verify that initial design requirements had been met. The field trial of this new telephone equipment – presently in progress at Mobile, Alabama, and at Chicago, Illinois – will produce user preference information. Favorable response to the use of this experimental equipment can forecast a new convenient service for telephone customers.

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Illinois Bell employee installing field-trial "drive-in" telephone set in Chicago location.