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Phone ruling could be boon

By John Schneidawind Mercury News Business Writer

A federal judge's decision allowing "Baby Bell" phone companies to offer computerized information services should significantly broaden the use of electronic mail and voice-messaging systems, industry observers say.

It should also be a boon to Silicon Valley telecommunications firms - some of which are already reaping rewards on Wall Street.

The ruling Monday by Judge Harold Green, who is overseeing the breakup of American Telephone & Telegraph Co., fell short of allowing the local phone companies to make equipment and handle longdistance calls. But it continues to broaden the types of businesses that are open to the regional phone companies.

Telecommunications analysts say that within the next two years, phone companies like Pacific Bell will be free to offer a host of new telephone services to subscribers, including the ability to receive or leave recorded voice messages without the use of answering machines.

The ruling could mean a dramatic jump in sales for several companies in Silicon Valley that have already pioneered the use

of sophisticated voice-messaging systems at major corporations. Although the Baby Bells can offer electronic mail and voicemessaging services, they still can't make that equipment.

As a result, the phone companies must buy voice-messaging systems from companies such as Octel Communications Corp. of Milpitas, Voysys Corp. of Sunnyvale and Centigram Corp. of San Jose.

"Each one of these (rulings) offers opportunities to sell big chunks of equipment," said Tom Rowley, vice president of marketing for Voysys.

Investors seem to agree. Since the ruling

FINANCIAL DIGEST

Unisys makes pacts with Sun Micro, AT&T

Unisys Corp. Wednesday announced technology agreements with American Telephone & Telegraph Co. and Sun Microsystems Inc. of Mountain View aimed at improving its competitive position among the growing number of computer makers using AT&T's Unix operating system. Unisys, the nation's second-largest mainframe computer maker after International Business Machines Corp., said it would work with AT&T to enhance Unix's limited ability to run complicated commercial applications. The Detroit-based concern also said that it had signed a licensing agreement allowing it to use Sun's design for a Unix microcprocessor that is based on the increasingly popular reduced-instruction set, or RISC, architecture. W. Michael Blumenthal, Unisys chairman and chief executive, said Unisys believed that Sun's microprocessor architecture, which has already been licensed to three chip makers, will stimulate the market for Unix applications.

INSIDERS WILL GET BETTER DEAL: Arbitrageurs were livid and analysts were puzzled Wednesday at R. H. Macy & Co.'s disclosure that more than 500 Federofed Department Stores executives will get what an-

