

**CLOUD COMPUTING EXPANDING TO INCLUDE SOME SECURITY FEATURES.** “The cloud” refers to dynamically scalable software provided as a service over the Internet. Cloud computing services generally provide business apps accessed from a web browser. By contrast, software and data are stored on the server. Increasingly, some security is in the cloud too.

This buzz word is over a decade old. However, it’s now heard daily in discussions about IT matters. The cloud can include the infrastructure, platform, software, and technologies that use the Internet. Cloud computing customers pay for what they need instead of owning it outright.

Therefore, costs can be saved because capital expenditures are usually lower and are converted to operational costs. As a minimum, the system has redundancies to protect databases in case of losses. E-mail security typically is incorporated.

Working security in. It’s a progression that cloud vendors will provide more security services. This can result in greater flexibility and lesser costs as further features are added. Cloud security computing should include protection against attacks like distributed denial of service (DDoS).

But security in the cloud has inherent limitations. For example, protecting the end user’s device is not possible. Also, firewalls aren’t useful in the cloud because the bandwidth they require is too great. The same goes for internal computer processes and access control.

**MASS EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SOFTWARE IS FLEXIBLE, FEATURES RICH.** Too many organizations still don’t have a mass emergency notification system installed. With the array of communications devices available, the ease of reaching someone somehow fast has never been better.

Bo Mitchell, a retired police chief from Wilton, CT, had long been interested in emergency planning. He has consulted with a high profile list of corporations and institutions on their emergency plans. This includes conducting a survey and then preparing, training, exercising and drilling the organization’s response. He’ll organize and run table top exercises, if requested.

How are workers and visitors best informed about emergencies? Mitchell saw the possibility of using software to facilitate emergency notification. Other vendors also provide software with the same intention. But Mitchell’s years of experience as a consultant on emergency planning gives him an advantage, he believes, in designing his feature-rich product called **911 Headcount®**. We recently saw a demonstration which included many features:

- Pre-planned emergency messages can be communicated via cellphone, voice, text, email, and SMS. (The system uses all means of contact to disseminate the emergency message.)
- The system collects contact info for employees, naturally. But 911 Headcount also easily enrolls visitors and contractors on site.
- Upon receiving the message by whatever means, the recipient pushes a key to indicate safety.

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