

SITA survey finds progress on IT security

Two-thirds of airlines see the need to improve management information surrounding IT security, according to SITA's 2009 Global Airline IT Security Survey.

The figure has dropped 10% over the last year, indicating that progress has been made on that front, Mark Prince, SITA's practice director for security, voice and convergence, said.

The perceived need for improvement is highest in the Asia Pacific re-

gion (84%) and in Africa and the Middle East (71%).

The survey was conducted in December by Loudhouse research, an international research agency headquartered in the U.K. Loudhouse interviewed 183 director-level technology professionals at airlines in five regions: the U.S., Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Middle East/Africa and Asia Pacific.

Prince said he was "quite surprised"
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that 68% of survey respondents said their carriers plan to maintain or increase their level of spending on IT security, despite the economically challenging times. Those companies should ensure that they are spending their money efficiently and effectively, he said.

Prince also was encouraged by a 14% increase in airlines that are interested in best practices. "They recognize that if competitors are doing something right, there is no shame in adopting their methods rather than reinventing the wheel," he said.

For the first time, the survey included questions about compliance with payment security standards. Visa has issued deadlines for

compliance with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards. The deadlines are September 2009 for data storage and September 2010 for validation procedures.

"The payment card industry is fed up with security breaches," Prince said. "They have to reimburse customers, and it costs \$25 to replace the piece of plastic, so the bill is quite substantial."

It will be a "tight squeeze" for some airlines to make the first deadline, he said. "Some respondents say they are in the preplanning or planning phase for compliance," he said. "If that is a major airline, it's highly unlikely it will make the deadline."

A small regional could get away with starting in July, he said.