

Hawaii Tracks Vehicle Violations With Online Monitoring System

Russell Nichols | May 20, 2010

You would think the tropical islands of Hawaii would be a paradise of profits for rental car companies. After all, the state's economy is driven by tourism.

But what happens when vacationers rent a car, get a parking ticket and fail to turn in the ticket to the rental office? It doesn't matter if the renter accidentally loses it or intentionally throws it out; that ticket clogs the Judiciary's case management system, which tracks them at the state level. It drives rental car companies crazy because they must pay part of the parking ticket fine.

"The Judiciary now has this paperwork nightmare to deal with," said Russell Castagnaro, general manager of eHawaii.gov, the state's Web portal. "Then somebody else ends up renting the car and it gets towed. So the rental car company has to get it out of the tow lot. It's a crazy expense."

Those nightmares may be over.

Last month, eHawaii.gov unveiled a first-of-its-kind online service that provides a weekly report to subscribers, identifying vehicles that have had violations during the past 31 days. According to Castagnaro, this service allows rental car companies that subscribe to upload all the vehicles in their fleet, actively monitor each one, pay off citations more quickly and avoid penalties. Private citizens and companies may subscribe to the service.

It's free to sign up, and costs \$3 for each violation reported by the system.

Leveraging the Judiciary's site management system and the state's existing Web portal, the Vehicle Monitoring Service (VMS) seeks to help fleet owners save time and labor costs associated with unpaid citations. The process of handling a violation on a rental car can take between two to 20 hours, Castagnaro said, so "from a labor standpoint, it's a clear winner."

Rental car companies only have to pay a portion of a citation, he said, but in the past they had to navigate excessive red tape. In some cases, an unpaid citation might have created a "stopper," which must be removed before a company can renew the vehicle tags. Through VMS, subscribers will receive reports weekly by e-mail, which will also make it easier to track the responsible party for each citation, Castagnaro said. The weekly reports go out automatically, but subscribers can also check their inventory online and pay for a violation anytime.

VMS was developed by Hawaii Information Consortium, part of e-government firm NIC's family of companies, in collaboration with various state and county agencies. VMS cost the state no money, Castagnaro said, but subscribers must pay \$3 per violation

detected to cover the cost of the application, upkeep, future features and so forth. In the future, he added, the system's services will expand to include options such as bulk renewals and the decommissioning of vehicles.

"It's geared toward fleet owners, but anybody can sign up for the service," Castagnaro said. "It would come in very handy for people who have teenagers."

<http://www.govtech.com/e-government/Hawaii-Tracks-Vehicle-Violations-With-Online.html>