



# West Manatee Fire and Rescue

Data-driven safety: West Manatee Fire & Rescue's STR strategy saves lives and boosts revenue



## OVERVIEW

West Manatee Fire and Rescue (WMFR) faced a significant public safety challenge on Anna Maria Island, where a surge in short-term rentals (STRs) created risks for visitors and residents. With a responsibility to ensure properties are always safe and compliant, the district needed a way to identify thousands of unregistered rentals. Using the Short-Term Rentals (Host Compliance) solution from Granicus, WMFR leveraged AI-powered technology to gain a comprehensive view of the rental landscape. This enabled the district to streamline inspections, enforce compliance, and generate new revenue – ultimately leading to a significant reduction in fires and drownings.

## SITUATION | RENTALS AT RISK

Anna Maria Island, a popular tourist destination within WMFR's jurisdiction, sees more than 400,000 visitors annually in its short-term rentals. This high volume of temporary residents created a complex public safety concern – specifically in regard to STR properties. Fire Marshal Rodney Kwiatkowski and his team were responsible for inspecting rental properties to ensure they met safety standards, yet they faced a critical information gap.

The district knew of approximately 2,200 rentals through the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), but Kwiatkowski suspected the actual number was far higher.

Unregistered properties operated outside of regulatory oversight, posing significant risks, including fire hazards and unsafe pool enclosures.

## MUST HAVE GRANICUS SOLUTION

### Short-Term Rentals

*"Without accurate data, which we didn't have prior to our partnership with Granicus, it was impossible for us to be effective in compliance. ... Our collaboration has transformed what was seemingly insurmountable into something very streamlined and proactive. The system now keeps property owners, visitors, and first responders safer."*

– Rodney Kwiatkowski,  
Fire Marshal, West Manatee  
Fire and Rescue



In fact, 73% of structure fires at single-family residences on Anna Maria Island occurred at STRs, and 100% of pediatric drowning incidents were at these rental properties.



**"Nothing will destroy the mental health and wellness [of a first-responder] faster than having to do CPR on a two-year-old,"** said Kwiatkowski. **"When we can prevent those things, which we're doing very successfully now, that's a major win for everyone."**

Without a reliable method to identify and contact all rental operators, the team at WMFR did not feel it could effectively fulfill its duty to protect the whole community. As Kwiatkowski noted, "I knew the hardest part about all of this would be identifying the rentals."

## SOLUTION | EVIDENCE FOR ENFORCEMENT

West Manatee Fire and Rescue implemented Granicus's Short-Term Rentals solution, which was designed to help governments and associations collect short-term rental tax revenues while enforcing safety standards.

Granicus' AI-powered technology automated the process of finding and monitoring rental properties across dozens of listing sites, while increased funding enabled WMFR to hire and train inspectors specifically for STR environments.

Granicus' Short-Term Rentals solution uses AWS's Relational Database Service (RDS) to provide the data needed to cross-reference listings with official records, pinpoint unregistered operators, identify non-compliant properties, and supply the evidence needed to ensure enforcement.

**This data-driven approach – along with the seamless teamwork between WMFR and Granicus – enabled the launch of a targeted outreach campaign, informing property owners of their legal obligation to register and schedule inspections.**

The solution also proved invaluable during disaster recovery when, after a hurricane, WMFR was able to verify which of the 1,100 properties deemed uninhabitable were still being advertised for rent – saving countless hours of manual work.



## RESULTS | SKYROCKETED SAFETY

Using Host Compliance, the district identified nearly 5,000 STRs — more than double the number listed with the DBPR. Addressing this lack of registrations drove a surge in compliance that generated more than \$3 million in new annual revenue. The additional funding enabled WMFR to hire three new inspectors and six additional firefighters, purchase new vehicles and equipment, and build a proactive, well-resourced safety program.

Most importantly, these efforts led to a substantial increase in public safety. Within three years, the proportion of structure fires occurring in local STRs on Anna Maria Island dropped from 73% to just 24%. Furthermore, there have been zero pediatric drownings associated with STRs reported in the past year.

WMFR created a safer environment for residents, visitors, and first responders by turning an insurmountable data problem into a streamlined, proactive process. As Kwiatkowski states, "Safe rentals and safe communities drive tourism and protect local jobs. Prevention and prosperity are not mutually exclusive; they're mutually beneficial and reinforcing."

## SHORT-TERM RENTALS, POWERED BY AWS

Granicus' Short-Term Rentals (Host Compliance) capability helps governments and associations collect short-term rental tax revenues while enforcing the safety and quality-of-life standards that helps create communities where people want to live and visit. Short-term Rentals uses AWS's Relational Database Service (RDS) to efficiently connect identification, enforcement, and revenue collection tasks. AWS's Simple Storage Service (S3), Elastic Container Service (ECS) and Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) ensure fast, reliable access to keep compliance efforts moving.

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## ABOUT GRANICUS

Granicus brings governments closer to the people they serve — driving meaningful change for communities around the globe with comprehensive cloud-based solutions for communications, government website design, meeting and agenda management software, records management, and digital services. Granicus empowers stronger relationships between government and residents across the U.S., U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

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