



Small Business Assistance Office

Annual Report

2000

Executive Summary

Since opening, the SBAO has . . .

- Received more than 2,500 total compliance requests.
- Conducted 23 compliance workshops with 308 total attendees.
- Distributed thousands of compliance publications to a variety of small businesses.

The Small Business Assistance Office (SBAO) had another successful year, logging 721 telephone hotline requests during 2000. Since opening in 1996, the SBAO has experienced an increase in annual calls, as more small business owners find out about our services. To date, the office has received more than 2,500 total compliance assistance requests.

The calls received during 2000 came from a diverse group of businesses such as auto shops, manufacturers, printers, dry cleaners and contractors. A greater response from these specific business sectors was likely due, in part, to targeted mass mailings from the SBAO during the year.

Although the SBAO's services have been limited to the Central Ohio area, it was interesting to note that an estimated 45 percent of incoming calls this year came from outside our service area. Many of these outside calls were received from our northeast and southwest district office areas. The SBAO was glad to assist these callers and we are hopeful that if such requests continue, this will serve as a catalyst for permanently expanding the SBAO's services statewide.

During the year, we published compliance materials for painting contractors, photographers and printers. The SBAO also updated its compliance self-assessment guide and created a catalogue of compliance publications for small businesses. In addition to targeted mass mailings, the SBAO worked with a number of trade associations this year to get compliance information distributed to small business owners. The SBAO distributed three issues of its newsletter, *The Small Business Resource* to about 3,500 small businesses. In addition, the office completed a special edition newsletter for auto service shops and sent this out statewide to approximately 7,000 auto shop owners.

To date, the office has sponsored 24 workshops, the majority of these focusing on Ohio EPA's hazardous waste regulations. A total of 325 small business owners or associates attended the workshops and the office continues to receive very positive feedback about this service.

Future plans include developing more workshop materials and compiling additional publications. The office is considering specific guidance to restaurant operators, contractors and salvage yards. As always, we welcome any feedback or suggestions you have on meeting the needs of small businesses and improving the services of the SBAO. Please feel free to contact us at (800) 329-7518 with your comments.

Laurie Stevenson
Program Manager

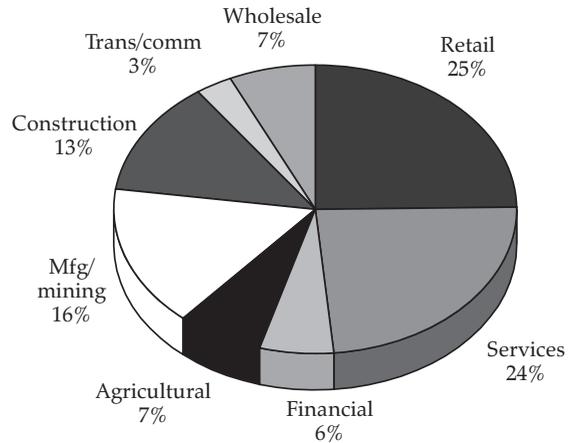
Introduction

About 97 percent of the businesses in Ohio are classified as small businesses. This totals over 250,000 small business establishments, the majority of which have fewer than 20 employees. Given the scope of environmental regulations, it is not surprising that many of these small businesses are subject to some environmental regulations.

And, although small business owners want to comply with the environmental laws, they are often not aware of the rules that apply to them and how to comply. Small business owners have multiple priorities and sometimes limited resources to devote to environmental compliance. With this, it can be difficult for them to keep up with changes in the regulations.

Ohio EPA's Small Business Assistance Office (SBAO) was established in 1996. The goal of the office is *"to help small businesses understand and comply with the multimedia, environmental regulations that apply to them."*

Figure 1: Small Businesses in Ohio by Industrial Classification

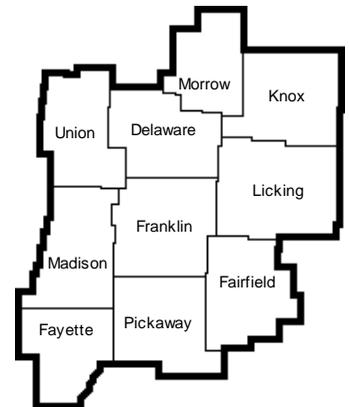


Services of the SBAO

The services of the SBAO are currently available to small businesses in Central Ohio with fewer than 100 employees (See Figure 2). The main activities of the SBAO include:

- Providing telephone and on-site assistance to help small business owners understand the environmental requirements.
- Conducting workshops to help increase awareness of environmental regulations.
- Developing and distributing compliance assistance resources (e.g., fact sheets, brochures) that help explain the regulations in easy-to-understand language.

Figure 2: SBAO Service Area



For small businesses to feel comfortable seeking assistance, confidentiality remains a key component of the SBAO's operations. The SBAO's written confidentiality procedures specify that information provided to the office will not be turned over to Ohio EPA's inspection or enforcement staff.

SBAO Telephone Hotline (800-329-7518)

The SBAO's toll-free telephone hotline remains the most frequently used service of the office. The hotline is staffed by environmental specialists from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The total number of calls received each year by the SBAO has increased steadily since the office opened (See Figure 3). The office received 721 calls during 2000 and has logged over 2,500 total compliance assistance requests to date. In addition, the SBAO experienced a higher number of average calls per month from 1999 to 2000 as presented in Figure 4. The peak months for calls to the SBAO were from January through March and June through September.

The SBAO's primary focus is to respond to calls from businesses in the Central Ohio area. Figure 5 summarizes the calls received by area. Where specific data was available, note that only 35 percent of the incoming calls to the

Figure 3:
Compliance Assistance Requests
Years 1996-2000

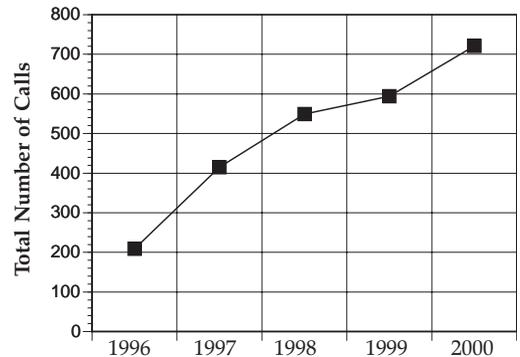
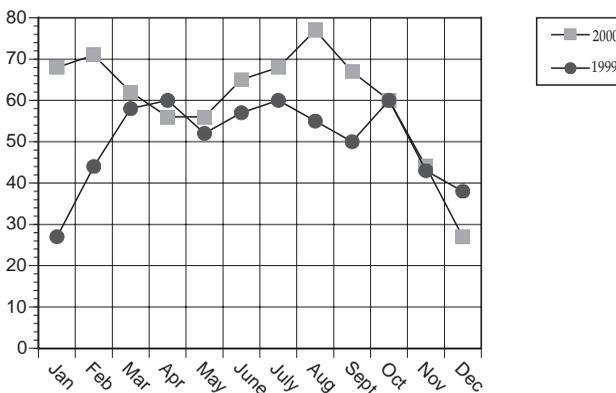


Figure 4:
Compliance Assistance Requests
by Month 1999-2000



SBAO were from the Central Ohio area. It is expected, however, that a large number of calls from areas "unknown" as shown in Figure 5 were likely calls from the Central Ohio area. This category represents situations where the business owner called the office anonymously and did not provide the business location, or where requests were received by e-mail and a location was not specified. If the "unknown" and CDO locations are combined, this accounts for 55 percent of the incoming calls.

The SBAO did respond to calls from all the other Ohio EPA district office areas, with the largest percentage of calls coming from our northeast district. What is interesting to note is that the SBAO does not actively market its services beyond Central Ohio, yet an estimated 45 percent of calls received were from outside the office's service area.

Calls to the office range from those related to a specific program area to multimedia questions about compliance in multiple program areas (air, waste, water). Figure 6 shows the calls received in 2000 by program/media. Approximately 30 percent of the requests were multimedia related. In addition, the office responded to a significant number of waste-related calls.

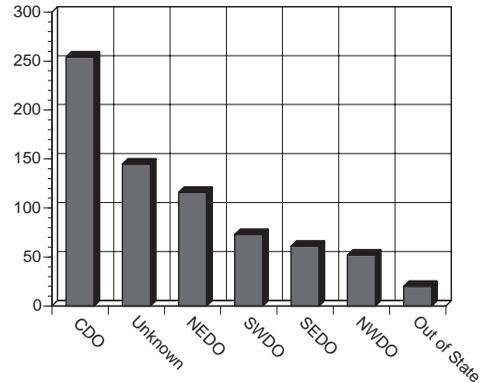
Calls to the SBAO come from a diverse group of businesses. Figure 7 summarizes the compliance requests received by business type. The small business sectors most frequently using the office included manufacturing companies, auto maintenance (including body shops) and other service-related businesses. This increase is likely due, in part, to targeted mass mailings of compliance assistance materials to these businesses.

During the year, the SBAO mailed industry-specific fact sheets to auto service shops, power washers, carpet cleaners, printers and painters. Such mailing efforts were helpful in prompting calls to the office from these businesses.

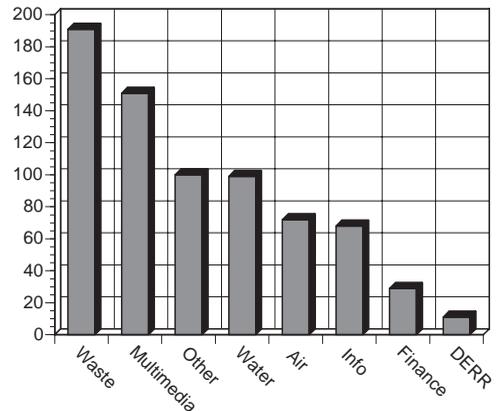
Environmental Compliance Workshops

The SBAO held several environmental compliance workshops for small businesses during 2000. This workshop project was initiated in 1998 and, to date, the office has hosted 24 workshops with a total attendance of 325. Nine of these workshops were held during 2000. The focus of the workshops in 2000 was compliance with Ohio's hazardous waste regulations. The SBAO completed the workshops with assistance from the Division of Hazardous Waste Management (DHWM) in Central District Office. Two workshops were held in partnership with the

**Figure 5:
Compliance Request
Calls Received by Area**



**Figure 6:
Compliance Assistance Requests
by Media**



Printing Association of Northern Kentucky and Ohio (PIANKO). During these workshops, the SBAO and DHWM provided an overview of the hazardous waste requirements for printers. The SBAO hopes to continue similar partnership efforts during 2001.

The office received feedback on the workshops by asking attendees to anonymously fill out a short questionnaire. To date, attendees have had a very positive response to the workshops. Overall, attendees have noted that the information presented is helpful to them in developing a better understanding of the regulations.

Printed Materials

The SBAO continued to collect materials and update its technical resource library during 2000. The office strives to obtain easy-to-understand regulatory guidance documents and fact sheets to distribute small businesses.

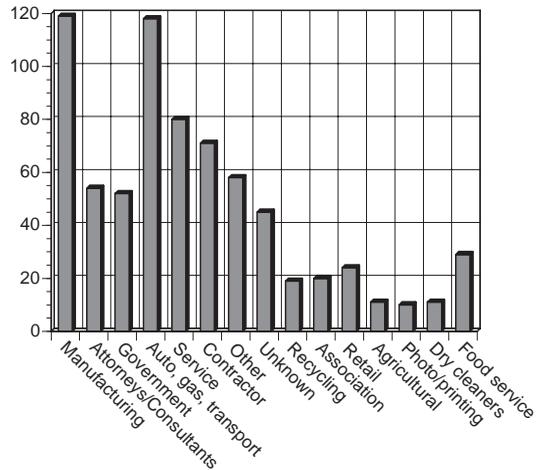
During the year, the SBAO wrote the following compliance assistance materials:

- Handling Paint Waste from Your Business (fact sheet)
- Working as a Painting Contractor? Know Your Ohio EPA Regulations (fact sheet)
- Does Your Business Process Photos or Film? Know Your Ohio EPA Regulations (fact sheet)
- Running a Print Shop? Know Your Ohio EPA Regulations (fact sheet)
- Identifying Your Hazardous Waste (fact sheet)
- Getting Copies of Ohio EPA's Regulations (fact sheet update)
- Ohio EPA Publications for Small Businesses (resource booklet)
- Small Business Environmental Compliance Self-Assessment Guide (update)

One of the key outreach activities during 2000 was targeted mass mailings to specific business sectors. During the year, the SBAO coordinated with Ohio EPA's Northeast District Office on statewide distribution of a home business/wastewater fact sheet (11,000 copies). Other business sectors were also targeted for mass mailings:

- Carpet cleaning fact sheet (75 mailed)
- Power washing fact sheet (234 mailed)
- Printers fact sheet (287 mailed)
- Painting contractor fact sheet (196 mailed)
- SBAO brochures (500 to Licking County Local Emergency Planning Commission)

**Figure 7:
Compliance Assistance Requests
by Business Type**



Approximately 3,500 small businesses in Central Ohio received the SBAO's quarterly newsletter, the Small Business Resource during 2000. In addition, the office compiled a special edition newsletter specifically for auto maintenance shops. All articles in the newsletter were directly related to environmental compliance issues for this small business sector. The SBAO completed a statewide mailing of the newsletter to approximately 6,000 auto service shops. Similar special edition newsletters are planned for other sectors such as dry cleaners, auto body shops and printers during 2001.

Web Site

Visit the SBAO's Web site at: www.epa.ohio.gov/other/sbao

The SBAO maintains a Web site and, to date, all of the fact sheets, information sheets and newsletters published by the office have been posted electronically. In addition, the SBAO has posted compliance resources developed by other divisions or by U.S. EPA. Small business owners can also order the SBAO's publications directly online. In 2001 the SBAO plans to put a customer feedback survey form on its Web site to get additional information on the compliance information needs of small businesses.

Program Marketing

During 2000, the SBAO participated as an exhibitor at a number of small business events, using each as an opportunity to distribute compliance assistance materials and market the services of the office. Some of the key events included:

- Ohio Township Association Meeting
- Ohio Construction Expo
- Bureau of Workers' Compensation Safety Expo
- Ohio Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee Meeting
- Ohio Environmental Health Association Conference
- Ohio Small Business Development Center statewide meeting
- Ohio Alliance for the Environment Conference
- Envirofest Conference, Cleveland, Ohio

Several other marketing strategies were used by the SBAO to maintain awareness of the office, including direct mailings and presentations at small business events and association meetings.

Measurement and Customer Feedback

The SBAO uses surveys as one method of gaining feedback on its services. Following receipt of a call, a customer feedback comment card is usually sent along with any information mailed. These postage-paid comment cards remain a convenient way for small businesses to provide information to the SBAO on its services. In addition, the office distributes a questionnaire to compliance workshop attendees to get feedback on the quality and content of workshops.

In 2000, the SBAO developed a short survey form to solicit e-mail related information from its small business customers. The office plans to provide more information electronically to those small business owners with Internet access. Plans for 2001 include developing an e-mail list for those interested in receiving the SBAO newsletter, training updates and announcements of newly available compliance resources.

In general, small businesses have provided favorable feedback to the office in terms of timeliness, responsiveness of staff and helpfulness of resources. The surveys are important tools to the SBAO in identifying additional compliance assistance needs and areas where its services can be improved. The SBAO will continue to explore ways of soliciting the opinions and feedback from small businesses during 2001.

Goals

The SBAO is currently working on goals and objectives for 2001. Based on a review of performance for the past year, we anticipate that activities for the coming year will include:

- Continuing to develop compliance assistance tools, including industry-specific materials.
- Developing additional workshop materials, including a possible full-day environmental compliance seminar for small businesses, covering a variety of topics.

Your feedback is always welcomed. If you have comments or suggestions, feel free to contact the SBAO directly at (800) 329-7518.

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