



Small Business Assistance Office

Annual Report 2001



“helping small businesses understand and comply with the multimedia, environmental regulations that apply to them.”

Executive Summary

The Small Business Assistance Office (SBAO) had another successful year, logging 725 telephone hotline requests during 2001. 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 3,200 compliance assistance requests.

The calls received during 2001 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 counties in our northeast and southwest district office areas. This high percentage

indicates a larger need and could serve as a catalyst for permanently expanding the SBAO's services statewide.

During the year, we published compliance materials for auto service shops, vehicle salvage yards and restaurants. The SBAO updated its Ohio EPA Resource Guide and created a catalogue of compliance publications for small businesses. The SBAO distributed three issues of its newsletter, *The Small Business Resource* to about 3,000 Central Ohio small businesses. In addition, the office completed a special edition newsletter for dry cleaners and sent it out to 1,500 cleaners statewide. To date, the office has sponsored 29 workshops, primarily focusing on Ohio EPA's hazardous waste regulations.

A total of 379 small business owners or associates attended the workshops and the office continues to receive very positive feedback about this service.

Since opening, the SBAO has . . .

- Received more than 3,200 compliance requests.
- Conducted 29 compliance workshops with 379 total attendees.
- Distributed thousands of compliance publications to a variety of small businesses.

Future plans include developing more workshop materials and compiling additional publications. 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 more than 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 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. 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."

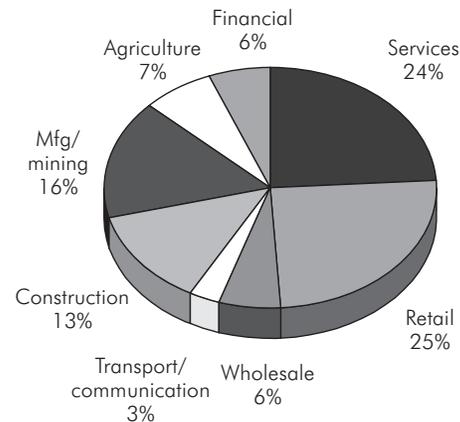
Services of the SBAO

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 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.

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

**Figure 1:
Small Business in Ohio by
Industry Classification**

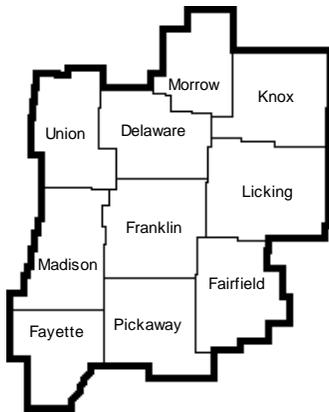


the office will not be turned over to Ohio EPA's inspection or enforcement staff.

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

**Figure 2:
SBAO Service Area**

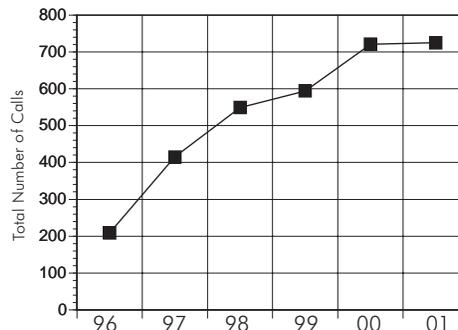


from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The total number of calls received each year by the SBAO has increased steadily since the office opened (See Figure 3). The office received 725 calls during 2001 and has logged more than 3,200 compliance assistance requests to date. A comparison of monthly calls from 2000 and 2001 is presented in Figure 4. The peak months for calls to the SBAO were from January through March and June through September for each year.

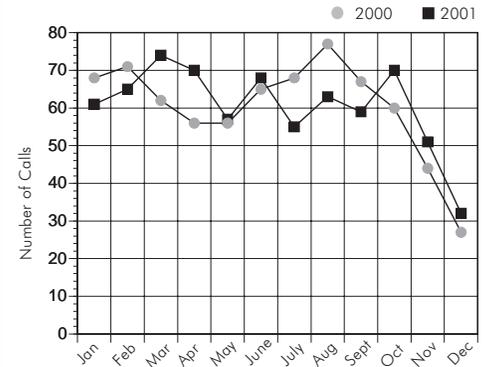
The SBAO's primary focus is to respond to calls from businesses in the Central Ohio area. Figure 5 summarizes the calls received by area. This figure shows a comparison between 2000 and 2001 for calls received by area.

The "unknown" 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. The number of unknown calls declined during 2001.

**Figure 3:
Compliance Assistance
Requests
Years 1996-2001**

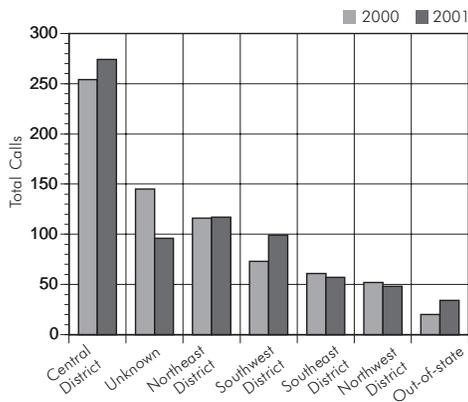


**Figure 4:
Compliance Assistance Calls
by Month
2000-2001**



The SBAO did respond to calls from other parts of the state, with the largest percentage of calls coming from northeast Ohio. Although the SBAO does not actively market its services beyond Central Ohio, an estimated 45 percent of calls received were from outside the office's service area. No other significant trends were noted, however, the SBAO did receive a greater number of calls from central Ohio and an increase in calls from southwest Ohio.

**Figure 5:
Compliance Requests by
Area
2000-2001**

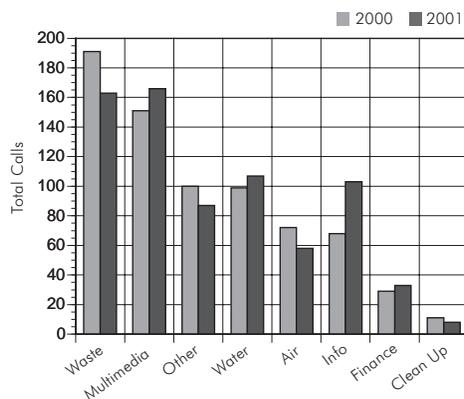


Calls to the office range from those related to a specific program area to questions about compliance in multiple program areas (air, waste, water). Figure 6 shows the calls received in 2001 by program/media. Approximately 23 percent of the requests were multimedia related, a slight increase over the previous year.

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. In looking at 2000 and 2001, the SBAO is starting to see some consistency in the types of businesses most frequently requesting assistance.

**Figure 6:
Compliance Requests by
Media
2000-2001**



Environmental Compliance Workshops

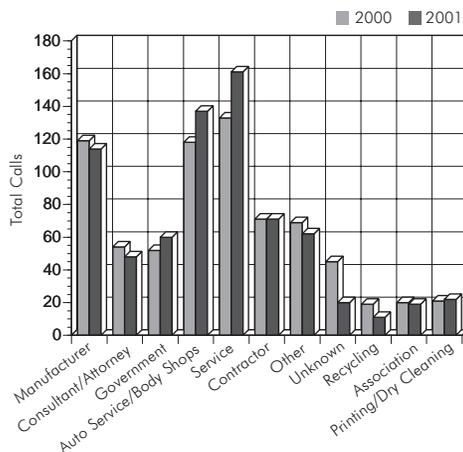
The SBAO held seven environmental compliance workshops for small businesses during 2001. Since 1998, the office has hosted 29 workshops with a total attendance of 379. The average attendance at these workshops is 13 participants.

To date, the SBAO has held 29 environmental compliance workshops in the Central Ohio area.

A total of 379 small business owners or associates have attended the workshops.

The focus of the workshops in 2001 was compliance with Ohio's hazardous waste regulations. The SBAO completed the workshops with assistance from the Division of Hazardous Waste Management in Central District Office. The office recently developed a workshop for used oil generators and will be sponsoring this during 2002.

**Figure 7:
Compliance Requests by
Business Type
2000-2001**



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 2001. The office strives to obtain easy-to-understand regulatory guidance documents and fact sheets to distribute to small businesses.

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

- Environmental Compliance Guide for Auto Service Shops (guidebook)
- Environmental Compliance Guide for Auto Salvage Shops (guidebook)
- Running a Mobile Oil Changing Business? Know Your Ohio EPA Regulations (fact sheet)
- Handling Solvent Contaminated Wipers (fact sheet)
- Understanding the SPCC Regulations (fact sheet)

- Restaurant Grease: Knowing Your Ohio EPA Regulations (fact sheet)
- Mobile Power Washing (updated fact sheet)
- Do You Know Where Your Floor Drains Go? (fact sheet)
- Ohio EPA Resource Guide (update)
- Ohio EPA Publications for Small Businesses (catalogue)

Two key publications for the office included the auto service and vehicle salvage yard guidebook. During 2001, the SBAO completed state-wide mailings of these publications. In addition, the salvage yard guidebook has been shared with a number of small business assistance offices in other states, with several requests to reprint either the entire guidebook or portions of it. In addition, the salvage guidebook was recently added to the National Auto Salvage Association's Web site.

In addition to the above, several other business sectors were targeted for mass mailings during 2001, including carpet cleaners, power washers and painting contractors. The office sent out 1,200 copies of its self assessment guide to various businesses in Central Ohio. The Central Ohio Restaurant Association received 700 copies of the SBAO's restaurant grease fact sheet. This fact sheet was distributed to local wastewater treatment plant operators and health departments.

Approximately 3,000 small businesses in Central Ohio received the SBAO's quarterly newsletter, *Small Business Resource*, during 2001. In addition, the office compiled a special edition newsletter specifically for dry cleaners. All articles in the newsletter were directly related to environmental compliance issues for this small business sector.

Web Site

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

The SBAO mailed the newsletter to approximately 1,500 cleaners.

All SBAO fact sheets, information sheets and newsletters have been posted electronically on the SBAO Web site. In addition, the SBAO has posted compliance resources developed by other Ohio EPA divisions or by U.S. EPA. Small business owners can order the SBAO's publications directly online.

Marketing

The SBAO participated in the following events during 2001 to market the services of the office. The office also continues to market its services through mass mailings and its Web site.

- Ohio Environmental Health Association Annual Meeting
- Bureau of Workers' Compensation Statewide Health & Safety Expo
- Governor's Small Business Council Meeting (presentation/panel discussion)
- Central Ohio Restaurant Association (presentation/panel discussion)

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 2001, the SBAO sent out a short survey to solicit e-mail related information from its small business customers. From this, the office developed an e-mail list which is used to distribute information electronically to interested parties. Information distributed includes 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, the SBAO completed a strategic planning process to help identify ways to improve its services. In addition, the office hosted focus groups with Agency staff to gain feedback on its services. The SBAO will use this information during project planning in 2002.

Goals

The SBAO is currently working on goals and objectives for 2002. 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.
- Development of a best management practices training video for auto salvage yards.

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