



Small Business Assistance Office

Annual Report

1999

Central Ohio
Small Business Assistance Office
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Internet Address:
<http://www.epa.state.oh.us/other/sbao/sbaindex.html>

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For more information about OEEF, contact 614-644-2873.

Marketing

The SBAO continued its marketing efforts to maintain awareness of the office. Several different marketing strategies were used, including:

- Direct mailings of SBAO brochures, newsletters and compliance resources;
- SBAO display booth at small business functions (expos, conferences, trade shows);
- Maintaining an Internet site; and
- Completing 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. The office has also developed a short survey form that accompanies its self assessment guide. In addition, the office distributes a questionnaire to compliance workshops attendees to get feedback on the quality and content of workshops.

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 2000.

Goals

The SBAO is currently working on goals and objectives for 2000. Based on a review of performance for the past year, it is anticipated that SBAO activities for the coming year will include:

- Continue to develop compliance assistance tools, including industry-specific materials. The office is considering industry specific fact sheets for auto salvage and painting contractors.
- Develop additional workshop materials, including collaboration with Ohio EPA's Small Business Assistance Program, Division of Air Pollution Control.

Executive Summary

The Small Business Assistance Office (SBAO) had another successful year during 1999, logging 600 calls during the year and more than 1,800 compliance assistance requests to date. The SBAO has seen a growth in the use of its hotline service, with annual average calls increasing since the office opened in 1996.

The SBAO . . .

- **Has received over 1,800 calls on its telephone hotline to date.**
- **Distributed over 15,000 publications during 1999, including its newsletter *The Small Business Resource*, various fact sheets and its small business environmental self-assessment guide.**
- **Conducted eight environmental compliance workshops for small businesses in 1999, with a total workshop attendance of 108 people. Since beginning its workshops in 1998, the SBAO has trained 200 small business owners.**

The calls were received from a diverse group of businesses, including contractors, dry cleaners, printers, manufacturing companies and others. Of these calls, many were multimedia calls (covering program areas like air, waste and water), reflecting the unique challenges that small business owners face in understanding and keeping up with environmental regulations.

The office received a large number of calls from carpet cleaners, power washers and the auto service sector, in response to targeted mailings of new fact sheets to these businesses. The SBAO also conducted 17 on-site compliance visits during the year.

Approximately 4,000 small businesses in Central Ohio received the SBAO's quarterly newsletter, *The Small Business Resource*. The newsletter is a way for the SBAO to actively reach businesses with information about the environmental regulations.

The SBAO developed industry specific fact sheets for auto repair shops, collision repair shops, woodworking facilities and beauty salons. The office also updated its *Ohio EPA Resource Guide* in 1999 with new phone numbers, agency contacts and rule information. Overall, the office distributed more than 15,000 publications during 1999.

In 1999 the SBAO conducted eight environmental compliance workshops for businesses. During the workshops, the SBAO provided an overview of Ohio EPA's hazardous waste regulations. A total of 108 people attended these workshops and the feedback from attendees has been very positive.

Goals for the coming year include developing additional workshops and other compliance assistance resources. It is hoped that the continued success of the SBAO during the coming year will be the catalyst for program expansion to other areas of the state. We always welcome your suggestions on how we can better serve small businesses. Please feel free to contact the office with questions or comments at 1-800-329-7518 or 614-728-8573.

Laurie Stevenson
Program Manager

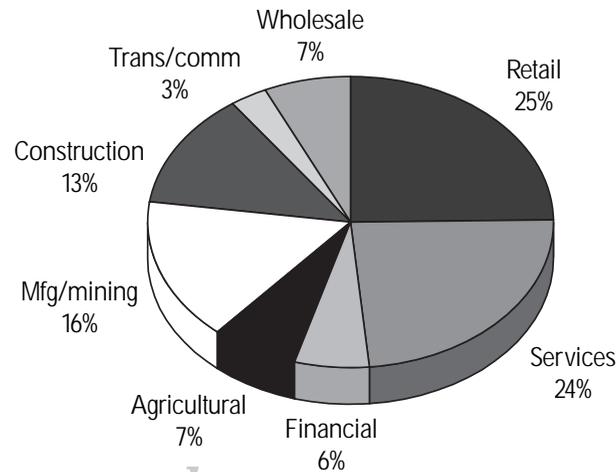
Introduction

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 businesses 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 to assist small businesses with their environmental compliance. The goal of the office is **"to help small businesses understand and comply with the multimedia, environmental regulations that apply to them."**

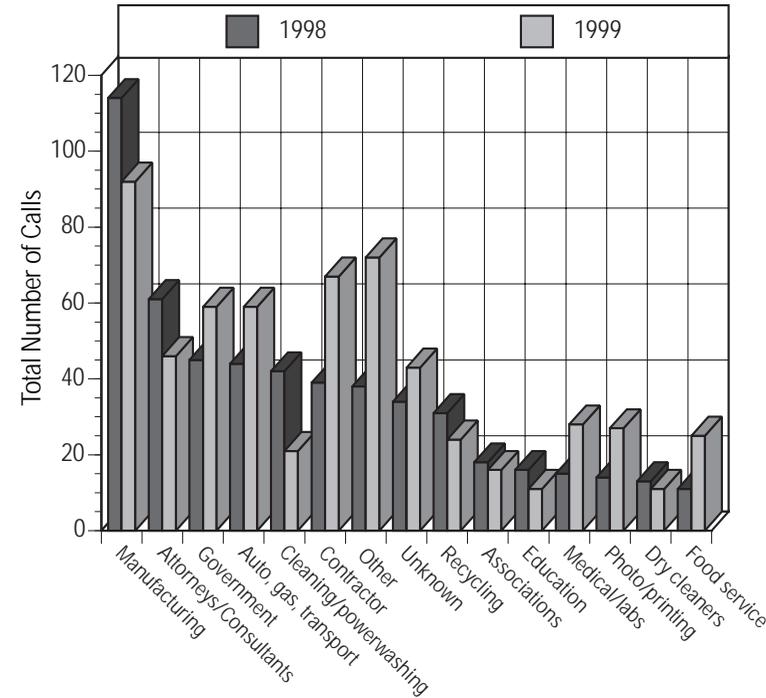
Figure 1: Small Businesses in Ohio by Industrial Classification



Our goal:

"to help small businesses understand and comply with the multimedia, environmental regulations that apply to them."

Figure 8: Compliance Requests by Business Type



The SBAO continued to collect materials and update its technical resource library during 1999. The office strives to obtain easy-to-understand regulatory guidance documents and fact sheets that can be distributed to small businesses.

Upon request, the SBAO distributed 1,685 of its compliance publications to trade/small business associations and other government agencies.

The office developed sector-specific fact sheets for auto maintenance shops, body shops, woodworking companies and nail salons. The office also developed a fact sheet on home-based businesses and Ohio EPA's wastewater regulations. During 2000, approximately 11,000 copies of this wastewater fact sheet will be distributed statewide through a project with the Division of Surface Water, NEDO.

Overall, the SBAO distributed over 15,000 publications, including these fact sheets and three issues of its newsletter *The Small Business Resource* during 1999.

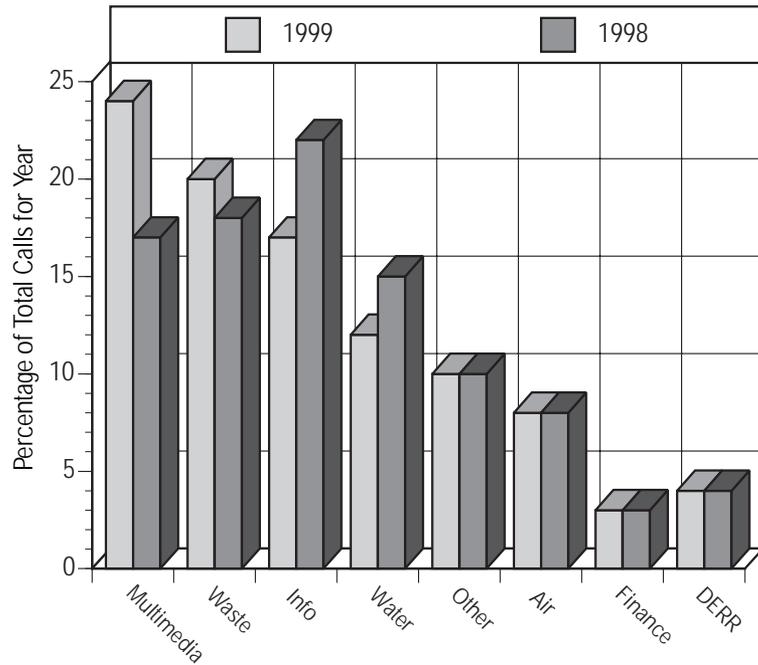
Web Site

Visit the SBAO's web site at:

www.epa.ohio.gov/other/sbao/sbaindex.html

The SBAO maintains a Web site which received more than 4,400 hits during 1999. To date, all of the fact sheets, information sheets and newsletters published by the SBAO have been posted on the Web site. 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 on-line. In 2000 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.

**Figure 7:
Compliance Requests by Media**



- Small Business Day at the Capitol
- Ohio Township Association Annual Meeting
- Ohio Environmental Health Association Annual Conference
- Printing & Graphics Expo

Printed Materials

During 1999, the SBAO completed industry specific mailings to Central Ohio businesses, including:

- 60 power washing companies;
- 175 carpet cleaners;
- 325 collision repair shops;
- 135 wood refinishing shops;
- 550 auto maintenance shops;
- 289 nail salons.

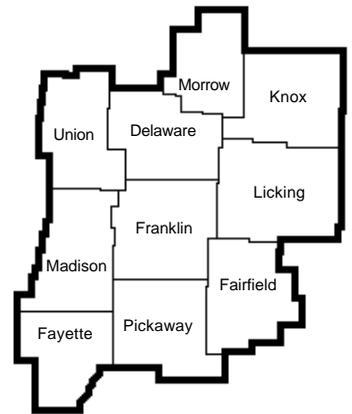
Services of the SBAO

The services of the SBAO are currently available to small businesses with fewer than 100 employees in a 10-county Central Ohio area (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.
- Keeping a comprehensive library of environmental compliance resources for small businesses and distributing publications.
- Developing compliance assistance resources (e.g., fact sheets, brochures) that help explain the regulations in easy-to-understand language.

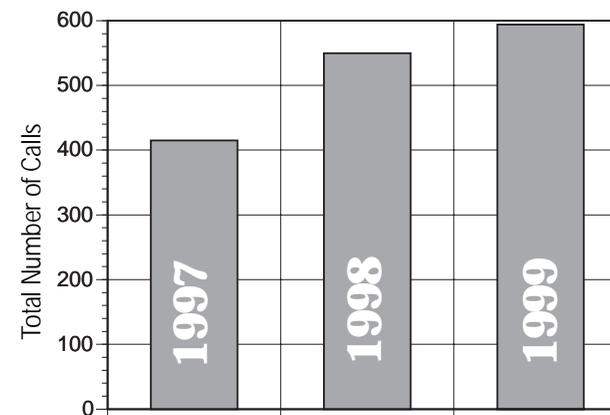
For small businesses to feel comfortable seeking assistance, confidentiality remains a key component of the SBAO's operations. The SBAO's written confidentiality procedures specify that information provided to the office will not be turned over to Ohio EPA's inspection or enforcement staff.

**Figure 2:
SBAO Service Area**



SBAO Telephone Hotline (800-329-7518)

**Figure 3:
Compliance Assistance Requests
1997-1999**

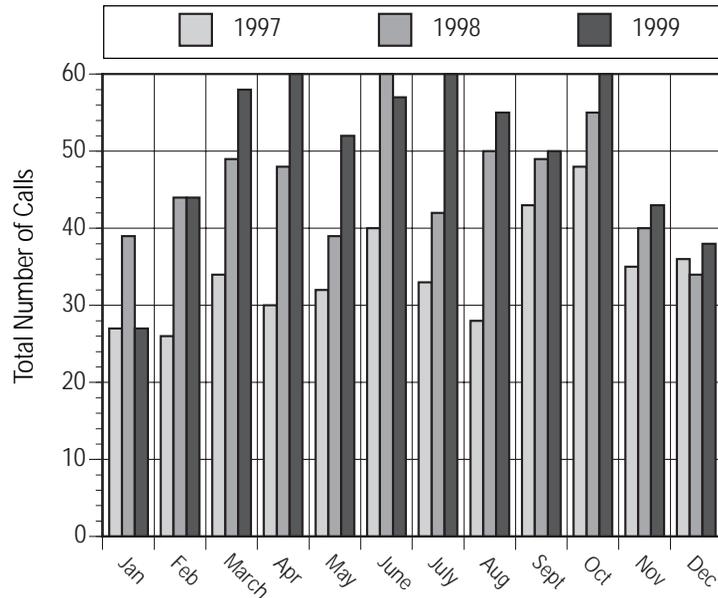


The SBAO's toll-free telephone hotline remains the most frequently used service of the office. The hotline is staffed by environmental specialists from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The total number of calls received each year by the SBAO has increased steadily since the office opened (See Figure 3). The office received 594 calls during 1999 and has logged a total of more than 1,800 compliance assistance requests to date. In addition, the SBAO experienced higher number of average calls per month from 1997 to 1999 as presented in Figure 4.

The majority of calls to the SBAO come from the Central Ohio area. However, the SBAO also responded to a number of calls during 1999 from other district offices and from out-of-state. (See Figure 5). In

**Figure 4:
SBAO Hotline Calls Per Month 1997-1999**



comparison to 1998, the office received more calls in 1999 from the Central Ohio area. It also received slightly more calls from the Northeast, Southwest and Southeast district offices. The SBAO is not actively marketed outside of the Central Ohio area. During 1999, a total of 268, or 40 percent of the SBAO's calls (excluding those from unknown areas) came from out of the Central Ohio area.

Many questions received by the office are related to a specific program area (e.g., hazardous waste regulations). Others are multimedia compliance requests from businesses who needed to know about compliance in multiple program areas (air, waste, water).

**Figure 5:
Compliance Reports 1998-1999
Calls Received by Area**

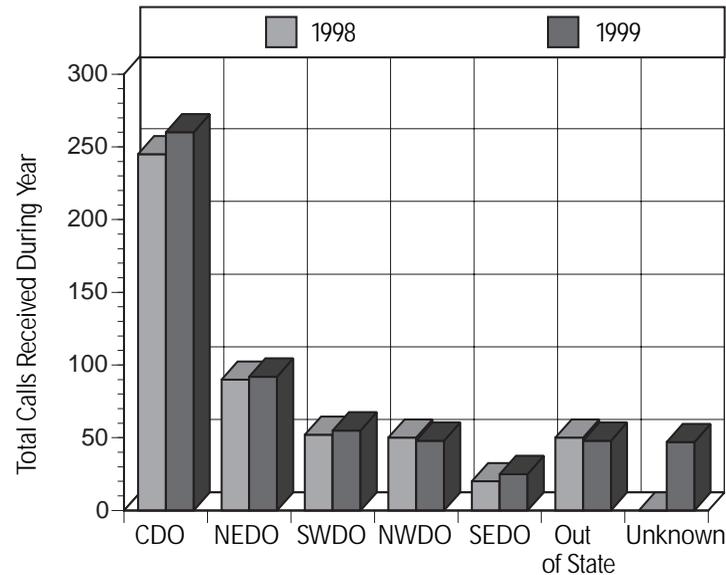


Figure 6 shows the calls received in 1999 by program/media. A comparison of requests from 1998 to 1999 in this area is provided in Figure 7. As shown, the office received more multimedia and waste related calls during 1999.

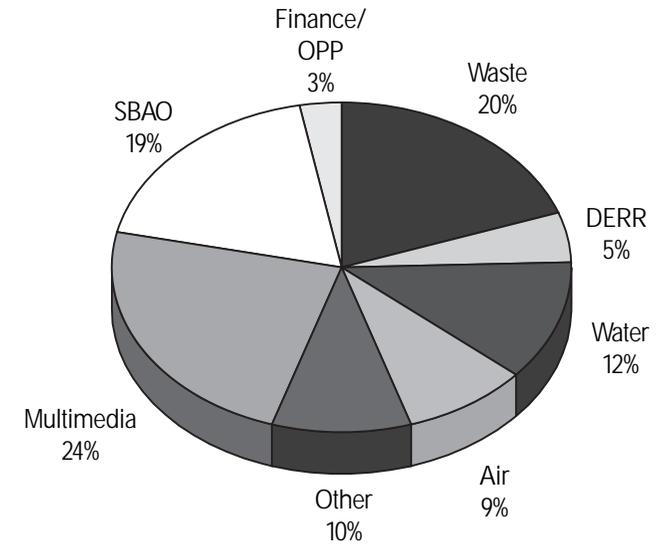
Calls to the SBAO come from a diverse group of businesses. Figure 8 summarizes the compliance requests received by business type. This figure shows a comparison of calls from 1998 to 1999. During 1999 the SBAO received an increase in calls from specific sectors, including retail/service businesses, contractors, auto service and collision repair companies.

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 and body shops, woodworking companies, beauty salons, power washers and carpet cleaners. These mailings prompted additional calls to the office from these businesses with questions or requests for more information.

On-site Compliance Assistance

The SBAO conducted 17 on-site compliance assistance visits at small businesses during 1999. Objectives for 2000 will include increased marketing of these services to businesses.

**Figure 6:
1999 Compliance Assistance
Requests by Media**



Environmental Compliance Workshops

In 1999, the SBAO held eight environmental compliance workshops for businesses. Through these workshops, small business owners received an overview of Ohio's hazardous waste regulations. A total of 108 people attended these workshops, with an average attendance per workshop of 14 people. One workshop resulted from a partnership with the Columbus City Health Department. The partnership effort resulted in 34 attendees at this workshop.

Feedback on the workshops was obtained 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.

The SBAO also worked with the Small Business Development Center network in Ohio to bring compliance information to local dry cleaners. Workshops were held around the state to provide compliance and pollution prevention information to dry-cleaners. The SBAO participated in the SBDC's Cleveland and Columbus workshops.

The SBAO also participated as an exhibitor at 18 small business events during the year, using each event as an opportunity to distribute compliance assistance materials. Some of the key events during 1999 included: