

## Rising Fuel Costs Impact Local Businesses

**T**he staggering cost of a tank of gas is affecting most every aspect of our lives. In the last five years, the price of a gallon of gas has jumped over 200%.



Your BBB spoke to several BBB Accredited Businesses recently to see how they are handling rising fuel costs. Are they passing them along to customers as a gasoline surcharge? A general price increase? Or absorbing them elsewhere?

Rick McGuigan, President of [Pine Ridge Carpet Cleaning Inc.](#) says they have seen a decline in repeat business which they feel is a direct result of rising fuel costs. "We raised prices by about 10% before the gas hike," said McGuigan. "Even though the carpet cleaning equipment gobbles up gas, we believe adding a fuel surcharge, for now, would be like sticker shock for our customers."

Emerson Myers, partner of [New Century Windows, LLC](#), says his company is also absorbing the added costs "Our suppliers have added a fuel surcharge to ship materials, but we haven't passed that along to our customers."

Some types of businesses have found their customers understand added costs. "Consumers are accepting of the fuel surcharge," says Ingrid Halpert of [Weiss Movers](#). Their trucks get about six miles per gallon of diesel fuel. "We added a surcharge last summer and had no complaints from consumers."

[Satellite Data of Ohio, Inc.](#), a payroll service, added a \$1.00 surcharge, but only for customers who use its courier service. "Our vendors are also passing their costs onto us," said CEO Laurene Smith. The shredding service they use tacked on an extra \$2.00 per visit.



**How are some businesses conserving fuel?** Myers of New Century Windows no longer visits a customer's home to give estimates, he gives quotes by phone. [Rainbow Muffler's](#) president, Bob Hrovat, told the BBB he has consolidated deliveries from three times per day to just once. Ginger MacCutcheon, vice president of [RYMAC Services](#), a janitorial company, adjusted scheduling so employees are doing jobs that are closest to their homes. MacCutcheon also traded a van which cost \$88 per tankful for a 1995 Escort that costs \$35 to fill.

While the approaches and solutions vary, every business we spoke to was doing its best to tackle the effects of rising fuel costs. Have any ideas you want to share? Send them to [yourbbb@cleveland.bbb.org](mailto:yourbbb@cleveland.bbb.org). □

**Reach Thousands of Savvy Shoppers!**  
New Advertising Opportunity on BBB Web Site

**B**ecause of the extreme popularity of online video, we have created an advertising program which allows your business to sponsor consumer education video clips on our highly-visited web site. These videos are viewed by the thousands of consumers who visit our web site each month looking for purchasing advice. Your company's advertising message can be easily and affordably packaged with a large library of video topic choices. [See the enclosed announcement for details.](#)

## Greater Cleveland BBB Activity Report January – July 2008

### Service to the Community

Reports issued on companies/charities.....216,998  
Complaints closed.....6,138  
Callers assisted by phone.....105,290  
www.cleveland.bbb.org visits.....104,875  
Advertising review cases initiated.....210

### Top 10 Inquiry-Generating Industries

1. Roofing Contractors
2. Mortgage Brokers
3. Construction & Remodeling Services
4. General Contractors
5. Auto Dealers - New Cars
6. Plumbing Contractors
7. Waterproofing Contractors
8. Work-at-Home Companies
9. Window Installation /Service
10. Collection Agencies

### Top 10 Complaint-Generating Industries

1. Banks
2. Collection Agencies
3. Auto Dealers - New Cars
4. Auto Dealers - Used Cars
5. Manufacturers & Producers
6. Auto Warranty Processing
7. Insurance Companies
8. Cell Phone Service & Supplies
9. Magazine Sales
10. Retail Furniture

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## PRO Show Gets Big Honors

**Professional Remodelers of Ohio (PRO)** received **2008 Show of the Year** honors for The RemodelOhio Show from the Association of Consumer Shows.

A panel of diverse professionals judged show entries on a variety of criteria, including marketing approaches, show features/special events, service to community and overall excellence.

The RemodelOhio Show was selected over entries submitted by consumer shows of all kinds from throughout the country. One Show of the Year award is presented to the entry that excels over all others.

Among its varied purposes, PRO encourages ethical conduct, sound business practices and professionalism in the remodeling industry.

## Exciting Changes Ahead for Your BBB Reliability® Report

In coming months, BBB's will launch a new system of company reporting that will use a letter grade rating system.

In order to assign the proper rating to your business, we need information related to the size of your company.

Please complete and return the form inserted in this edition of your "Market Monitor" as soon as possible.

Watch future editions of the "Market Monitor" for more details about the grade ratings.

Start With Trust. Before you donate to an unfamiliar charity, check it out at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

## How to Reach Us

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W [www.cleveland.bbb.org](http://www.cleveland.bbb.org)

E [yourbbb@cleveland.bbb.org](mailto:yourbbb@cleveland.bbb.org)

## BWC Reduces Group-Rating Maximum Discounts

**O**n June 27, 2008, the Board of Directors of the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) voted to decrease the maximum premium discount that participants in Ohio's group-rating programs can receive.

Last fall, the maximum discount went from 90% to 85% beginning with the July 1, 2008 rate year. BWC reduced it further from 85% down to 77% effective July 1, 2009, and its long-term plan calls for reducing the maximum group-rating discount even further – to 65% by 2010. To soften the blow, the BWC also approved a 20% cap on premium increases in any single year, as well as caps on increases to employers removed from group-rating.

The BBBs of Ohio sponsor one of the state's largest group-rating plans, saving over 6,000 businesses an average of \$17,000 off base rated premiums.

To get a no obligation savings projection, call Laura Fitzgerald at (216) 623-8964 x107. □

## BBB Releases First Progress Report on Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative

**I**n November, 2006, the BBB and 10 major food and beverage companies formed the **Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative** (CFBAI) to encourage healthier dietary choices and healthy lifestyles of children by changing the way products are advertised to children. This program uniquely focuses on the nutritional profile of food and beverage products featured in advertising primarily directed to children under 12. BBB continuously monitors compliance with pledges made by the participants, which now number 14 companies.



Through the commitments of the CFBAI participants, the BBB report indicates that the landscape of children's advertising already had begun changing significantly by the end of 2007. With the full implementation of six of the participants' pledges and the efforts of the other participants to start implementing their pledges, two major shifts occurred; some companies stopped engaging in child-directed advertising for their food and beverage products entirely, and more better-for-you products were being advertised than before. For example:

- The Campbell Soup Company stopped featuring Chicken Noodle Soup on its web sites directed at children.
- Cadbury Adams stopped marketing Bubblicious gum to children.
- Kelloggs reformulated several products, including Apple Jacks, Froot Loops, and Corn Pops, to meet the company's declared nutritional requirements for children.
- Burger King started offering a new Kids' Meal, featuring macaroni and cheese, that meets its nutritional requirements for children.
- Mars eliminated the "MINIS Zone" from the M&M'S® web site because the MINIS® characters, a new set of characters separate from the M&M's® characters, were developed to appeal to children 6 and older (in contrast, Mars stated the original M&M's characters were designed to appeal to adults).

As more of the participants fully implement their pledges, these positive changes are expected to become even more significant. View the BBB's CFBAI report at [bbb.org](http://bbb.org) and learn more about initiative goals and participants. □

## BBB Works to Shut Down Online Scammers

**A** Pennsylvania woman contacted the BBB earlier this month when she became suspicious after applying online for a \$10,000 loan from [Omron and Associates](#) (Omron), a company that claimed to be located in Cleveland. She was immediately approved and instructed to wire a \$1500 "security blanket" fee before she could receive the funds. The loan papers were emailed to her and contained another applicant's name instead of hers. She notified Omron of the error and received a second set of papers that were identical to the first set except Omron's name was replaced with "First American Financial Consultants" and the loan amount was incorrect. After finding online accounts of consumer complaints about First American Financial Consultants, she became concerned and contacted us.

We confirmed the company was using a fictitious Cleveland address and phoned Omron posing as the consumer to get more information. Omron's representative instructed us to wire the \$1500 "security blanket fee" to Montana Foster in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. We were told to tell the wire service, if asked, that the funds were not for a loan, in order to avoid a \$600-\$1000 "loan tax fee" that the wire service would tack on.

We confirmed with MoneyGram that there were no "loan tax fee" add-ons. Rather, this was a common ruse used by advanced fee loan companies to get around the wire service's attempts to dissuade consumers from falling for advanced fee offers. We then contacted the company that provided Omron's web site registration service and, after getting the results of our investigation and documentation that the firm was operating without proper licensing as an Ohio loan broker, the web site registration service shut the site down.

Omron's operators will, no doubt, surface again under another name. When they do, we will be waiting. □

## BBB Board Revokes Accreditation of Local Businesses

**B**BB accreditation is a privilege given to businesses which agree to comply with BBB Standards. Accreditation is suspended by BBB staff when a company fails to live up to those standards. Suspensions are referred to the Accreditation Committee of the BBB's Board of Directors, which rules on revocation. The following revocations were issued in July, 2008.

**Richard G. Skoula DDS and Associates** - Dr. Skoula's dental license was indefinitely suspended under the terms of a Consent Agreement he signed with the Ohio State Dental Board and, as a result, his dental practice's BBB accreditation was revoked.

**Verbatim Construction** - BBB accreditation was revoked due to a failure to resolve three consumer complaints about roof repairs. The company's owner did not honor his repeated promises to BBB staff that the matters would be handled.

**Karaoke Kandy Store** - BBB staff tried several times to get a response from this company after a consumer complaint was filed concerning a damaged DVD player. A response was never received, however, and accreditation was revoked.

**1st Gear Auto** - Several serious consumer complaints concerning online vehicle sales, coupled with an increase in the volume of complaints filed, led to this company's accreditation revocation. Consumers complained that cars purchased on 1st Gear Auto's website were misrepresented.

**Great Expectations** - BBB accreditation for this dating service was revoked due to a pattern of consumer complaints concerning sales and advertising practices and legal action taken by the Arizona Attorney General, as well as complaints reported by BBB's involving other Great Expectations locations with common ownership to the Cleveland office. □

## B2B Discounts for BBB Accredited Businesses

**New! All Ohio Secure Shred** will shred documents on site for \$22/month for one container. Also, one-time bulk purge for 10 cents/lb. Call [216-332-9850](tel:216-332-9850) or [888-747-3394](tel:888-747-3394).

**New! Corporate Investigative Services**, a national Webcheck provider, is offering 10% off on electronic fingerprinting to new customers. Call [440-614-0100](tel:440-614-0100).

### Credit/Debit Card Processing

First National Merchant Solutions - Rates as low as 1.51% on retail transactions and 2.09% for mail and phone orders (plus a nominal fee per transaction). Small monthly fee. Call Dave Werth at [\(888\) 562-6737](tel:888-562-6737).

### Phone Service

Easton Telecom - Rates ranging from 2.5¢ - 3.5¢/minute for long distance calls, toll-free lines as low as 1.79¢/minute. Contact Jim Butler at [\(800\) 222-8122](tel:800-222-8122).

### Payroll Service

Heartland Payroll Co - Savings of as much as 50% on payroll fees. Call Brian Nelson at [\(440\) 371-5245](tel:440-371-5245).

### Pre-Employment Background Reports

Intellicorp - Instant online background checks for under \$10 per report. Monthly fees waived. Call Chris Hughes for a FREE trial at [\(888\) 290-0634](tel:888-290-0634).

### Retirement Plans

Oswald Financial will waive plan design consultation fees (typically \$500 - \$1,000) and plan analysis fees (typically \$1,500 - \$6,000) one time. Call Dave Kulchar at [\(216\) 367-8752](tel:216-367-8752).

### More B2B Discounts Available

Enjoy savings on products and services offered by many other BBB Accredited Businesses. Call Jan Stagneth at [216-623-8964](tel:216-623-8964) x206 to get a list of offers or to add your company's offer to the list!



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### Did you Miss the First Secure Your ID Day?

RadAir Complete Car Care and News Channel 5 are back as sponsors for the second BBB "Secure Your ID Day" shredding event on **Saturday, September 20th**.

The event will be held from **10 AM - 2 PM** at RadAir's Westlake location at 27051 Detroit Road.

All Ohio Secure Shred is again donating use of its commercial shredding trucks. You can shred up to 3 boxes or 50 pounds of sensitive documents at no charge.

### Still Not Using the BBB Seal On Your Web Site? Why Not?

Call Laura Fitzgerald at (216) 623-8964 x107 to sign up for [BBBOnLine](http://BBBOnLine). There is no additional fee for this program.

## New Ways to Promote your BBB Accreditation



Easel Plaque (L) and Table Tent (R)

"Start With Trust" stickers

**Y**our BBB accreditation sets you apart as a trustworthy company committed to ethical business practices. An assortment of new items makes it easy for you to display that commitment and the BBB Accredited Business seal on your sales materials, at your trade show booth, and on your counter. Order yours today! Contact Janice Lightner at (216) 623-8964 x207 or [janice@cleveland.bbb.org](mailto:janice@cleveland.bbb.org).

**Easel plaque:** \$7.00. (We will send an updated "year" sticker with your annual renewal.)

**Table tents:** Use these at trade shows. Free for the asking.

**Stickers** - \$15 per roll of 500 stickers. Place them on contracts, brochures, direct mail pieces, etc. ☐