

GEOGRAPHY

RISING GLOBAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Coal , petroleum , and natural gas are known as fossil fuels because they formed slowly from the organic remains of prehistoric plants and animals . They are nonrenewable resources that are declining in supply every day .

Since 1900 , the amount of energy used by the world's people has doubled every 20 years . As fossil fuels will account for 90 percent of the world's energy use by the year 2020 , many experts are predicting that the supply of fossil fuels will be able to keep up with demand for it . And as populations grow , nations will continue to feud over energy use .

Coal is needed , along with iron ore , to make steel , a basic material for all industrial nations . Coal is also the source of many chemical products such as synthetic rubber , synthetic fabrics , plastics , and even paint .

Petroleum is the source of many fuels such as gasoline to run our transportation systems and diesel fuels for heating homes . It also is used in the production of chemical fertilizers , pesticides , and plastics . No nation can be an industrial power without a dependable source of petroleum .

Unfortunately the burning of fossil fuels creates a problem with greenhouse gasses . If fossil fuel use continues to rise as expected , so will global temperatures , and that will have severe consequences for our planet . For example , increased temperatures will result in expanding deserts making land unusable for farming , and we have less water.

Humans have to kick the fossil fuel habit . The brightest hope for the future lies in a commitment to increase energy efficiency , reduce demand , and move toward use of renewable resources such as wind , sun , water , and geothermal heat .

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