

POLLUTION OF OUR PLANET

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Pollution is the introduction by man into the environment of contaminants that causes harm or discomfort to humans or other living organisms, or damages the environment. Pollution can be in the form of chemical substances, or energy such as noise, heat, or light. Pollution is often categorized into point source and nonpoint source pollution.

In the hierarchy of controls, pollution prevention and waste minimization are more desirable than pollution control. Motor vehicle emissions are one of the leading causes of air pollution. China, the United States, Russia, Mexico, and Japan are the world leaders in air pollution emissions; however, Canada is the number two country, ranked per capita. Principal stationary pollution sources include chemical plants, coal-fired power plants, oil refineries, petrochemical plants, nuclear waste disposal activity, incinerators, large livestock farms (dairy cows, pigs, poultry, etc.), metal production factories, plastics factories, and other heavy industries.

Pollution can also be the consequence of a natural disaster. For example, hurricanes often involve water contamination from sewage, and petrochemical spills from ruptured boats or automobiles. Larger scale and environmental damage is not uncommon when coastal oil rigs or refineries are involved. Some sources of pollution, such as nuclear power plants or oil tankers, can produce widespread and potentially hazardous releases when accidents occur. In the case of noise pollution the dominant source class is the motor vehicle, producing about ninety percent of all unwanted noise worldwide.

Adverse air quality can kill many organisms including humans. Ozone pollution can cause respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, throat inflammation, chest pain, and congestion. Water pollution causes approximately 14,000 deaths per day, mostly due to contamination of drinking water by untreated sewage in the developing countries. Oil spills can cause skin irritations and rashes. Noise pollution induces hearing loss, high blood pressure, stress, and sleep disturbance.

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