

ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

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The harmful effect on the environment of by-products of human activity, principally industrial and agricultural processes - noise, smoke, car emissions, chemical and radioactive effluents in air, seas, and rivers, pesticides, radiation, sewage, and household waste.

Air pollution is especially severe in the heavily industrialized cities. Coal-using industries are major sources of high levels of uncontrolled emissions of harmful substances. Over one-third of the emissions into the atmosphere originate from automobile transport. It is aggravated by the use of leaded gasoline and different engines as well as a lack of catalytic converters.

Acid rain is linked with damage to and the death of forests and lake organisms in Scandinavia, Europe, and eastern North America. It also results in damage to buildings and statues. US and European power stations that burn fossil fuels release about 8 g of sulphur dioxide and 3 g of nitrogen oxides per kilowatt-hour.

Every day a hectare of the world's forests is being destroyed forever. There are two reasons - land and wood. When we destroy the forest, we lose not only the trees but the homes of millions of animals and plants together with them. At the moment there are between five and ten million species of animals and plants on the Earth. One million of these is extinct. All kinds of species are in danger - fish, reptiles, birds, insects - as well as thousand of plants.

Phenomenon of the Earth's atmosphere by which solar radiation, trapped by the Earth and re-emitted from the surface, is prevented from escaping by various gases in the air. The result is a rise in the Earth's temperature (global warming). The main greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, and chlorofluorocarbons. Fossil-fuel consumption and forest fires are the main causes of carbon dioxide build-up; methane is a byproduct of agriculture (rice, cattle, and sheep). Water vapour is another greenhouse gas.

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