

Fossil Fuels: Oil

By Angel Ruiz

Ever wondered what a **fossil fuel** is? **Oil** is one example of a fossil fuel. Oil is made from the remains of **decayed** (dead) plants and animals that died millions and millions of years ago. How do dead plants and animals turn into oil? Good question! A very long time ago, when those very small plants and animals died, they sank to the bottoms of oceans and swamps. Lots and lots of sand, clay and silt (sediment) settled over them. Over time, a great deal of **sediment** piled up on the decayed plants and animals. This weight caused a lot of pressure to build up on the bottom layer of decayed matter and it became very hot. The **sediments** formed into sedimentary rocks and the decayed plants and animals turned into a dark, heavy liquid we call oil.



The oil that we get directly from the ground is called **crude oil**, and has to be **refined**, or processed and cleaned, before we use it. One product we get from refining oil is **gasoline**. People all over the world use gasoline to fuel their cars. It also powers airplanes, trucks, boats, and factory machinery. But we use oil to make many, many other things. We need oil to make everything from plastic to some medicines!



When we use oil it can **pollute** the environment. This can happen in the water, on land and in the air.

Sometimes boats carrying oil get in accidents and spill oil into the water.

These oil spills can kill plants and animals in the ocean. Also, when

people pump gasoline for their cars

some of the gasoline can drip onto the ground, and can later be washed into rivers when it rains. When oil is burned, it releases bad toxins into the air that we breathe. Oil provides us with a lot of energy, but it can also be dangerous for humans and the environment. It's a reason we need to be careful of when we use it!

