



Climate Change Resources: Glossary

Many of the following terms are found in the EPA's State and Local Climate Change Outreach Toolkit. A number of other terms that relate to global climate change are included as well.

ABIOTIC⁷

Nonliving. Compare *biotic*.

ABSORPTION OF RADIATION¹

The uptake of radiation by a solid body, liquid or gas. The absorbed energy may be transferred or re-emitted.

ACID DEPOSITION⁶

A complex chemical and atmospheric process whereby recombined emissions of sulfur and nitrogen compounds are redeposited on Earth in wet or dry form. See *acid rain*.

ACID RAIN⁶

Rainwater that has an acidity content greater than the postulated natural pH of about 5.6. It is formed when sulfur dioxides and nitrogen oxides, as gases or fine particles in the atmosphere, combine with water vapor and precipitate as sulfuric acid or nitric acid in rain, snow, or fog. The dry forms are acidic gases or particulates. See *acid deposition*.

ACID SOLUTION⁷

Any water solution that has more hydrogen ions (H⁺) than hydroxide ions (OH⁻); any water solution with a pH less than 7. See *basic solution*, *neutral solution*.

ACIDIC⁷

See *acid solution*.

ADIABATIC PROCESS⁹

A thermodynamic change of state of a system such that no heat or mass is transferred across the boundaries of the system. In an adiabatic process, expansion always results in cooling, and compression in warming.

AEROSOL^{18,9}

Particulate matter, solid or liquid, larger than a molecule but small enough to remain suspended in the atmosphere. Natural sources include salt particles from sea spray, dust and clay particles as a result of weathering of rocks, both of which are carried upward by the wind. Aerosols can also originate as a result of human activities and are often considered pollutants. Aerosols are important in the atmosphere as nuclei for the condensation of water droplets and ice crystals, as participants in various chemical cycles, and as absorbers and scatters of solar radiation, thereby influencing the radiation budget of the Earth's climate system. See *climate*, *particulate matter*.

AFFORESTATION²

Planting of new forests on lands that have not been recently forested.



EPA'S STATE AND LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAM

AIR CARRIER⁸

An operator (e.g., airline) in the commercial system of air transportation consisting of aircraft that hold certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the Department of Transportation to conduct scheduled or non-scheduled flights within the country or abroad.

AIR POLLUTANT

See *air pollution*.

AIR POLLUTION⁷

One or more chemicals or substances in high enough concentrations in the air to harm humans, other animals, vegetation, or materials. Such chemicals or physical conditions (such as excess heat or noise) are called air pollutants.

ALBEDO⁹

The fraction of the total solar radiation incident on a body that is reflected by it.

ALKALINITY⁶

Having the properties of a base with a pH of more than 7. A common alkaline is baking soda.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY⁶

Energy derived from nontraditional sources (e.g., compressed natural gas, solar, hydroelectric, wind).

ANAEROBIC⁶

A life or process that occurs in, or is not destroyed by, the absence of oxygen.

ANAEROBIC DECOMPOSITION²

The breakdown of molecules into simpler molecules or atoms by microorganisms that can survive in the partial or complete absence of oxygen.

ANAEROBIC LAGOON²

A liquid-based manure management system, characterized by waste residing in water to a depth of at least six feet for a period ranging between 30 and 200 days. Bacteria produce methane in the absence of oxygen while breaking down waste.

ANAEROBIC ORGANISM⁷

Organism that does not need oxygen to stay alive. See *aerobic organism*.

ANTARCTIC "OZONE HOLE"⁶

Refers to the seasonal depletion of stratospheric ozone in a large area over Antarctica. See *ozone layer*.

ANTHRACITE²

A hard, black, lustrous coal containing a high percentage of fixed carbon and a low percentage of volatile matter. Often referred to as hard coal.

ANTHROPOGENIC²

Human made. In the context of greenhouse gases, emissions that are produced as the result of human activities.

ARABLE LAND⁷

Land that can be cultivated to grow crops.

AROMATIC⁶

Applied to a group of hydrocarbons and their derivatives characterized by the presence of the benzene ring.

ASH⁶

The mineral content of a product remaining after complete combustion.

ASPHALT²

A dark-brown-to-black cement-like material containing bitumen as the predominant constituent. It is obtained by petroleum processing. The definition includes crude asphalt as well as the following finished products: cements, fluxes, the asphalt content of emulsions (exclusive of water), and petroleum distillates blended with asphalt to make cutback asphalt.

ATMOSPHERE¹

The mixture of gases surrounding the Earth. The Earth's atmosphere consists of about 79.1 percent nitrogen (by volume), 20.9 percent oxygen, 0.036 percent carbon dioxide and trace amounts of other gases. The atmosphere can be divided into a number of layers according to its mixing or chemical characteristics, generally determined by its thermal properties (temperature). The layer nearest the Earth is the *troposphere*, which reaches up to an altitude of about 8 kilometers (about 5 miles) in the polar regions and up to 17 kilometers (nearly 11 miles) above the equator. The *stratosphere*, which reaches to an altitude of about 50 kilometers (31 miles) lies atop the troposphere. The *mesosphere*, which extends from 80 to 90 kilometers atop the stratosphere, and finally, the *thermosphere*, or *ionosphere*, gradually diminishes and forms a fuzzy border with outer space. There is relatively little mixing of gases between layers.

ATMOSPHERIC LIFETIME

See *lifetime*.

ATOMIC WEIGHT⁴

The average weight (or mass) of all the isotopes of an element, as determined from the proportions in which they are present in a given element, compared with the mass of the 12 isotope of carbon (taken as precisely 12.000), that is the official international standard; measured in daltons.

ATOMS⁷

Minute particles that are the basic building blocks of all chemical elements and thus all matter.

AVIATION GASOLINE⁸

All special grades of gasoline for use in aviation reciprocating engines, as cited in the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) specification D 910. Includes all refinery products within the gasoline range that are to be marketed straight or in blends as aviation gasoline without further processing (any refinery operation except mechanical blending). Also included are finished components in the gasoline range, which will be used for blending or compounding into aviation gasoline.

BACTERIA⁷

One-celled organisms. Many act as decomposers that break down dead organic matter into substances that dissolve in water and are used as nutrients by plants.

BARREL (bbl)⁶

A liquid-volume measure equal to 42 United States gallons at 60 degrees Fahrenheit; used in expressing quantities of petroleum-based products.

BASIC SOLUTION⁷

Water solution with more hydroxide ions (OH⁻) than hydrogen ions (H⁺); water solutions with pH greater than 7. See *acid solution*, *alkalinity*, *acid*.

BIODEGRADABLE⁷

Material that can be broken down into simpler substances (elements and compounds) by bacteria or other decomposers. Paper and most organic wastes such as animal manure are biodegradable. See *nonbiodegradable*.

BIOFUEL^{3&7}

Gas or liquid fuel made from plant material (biomass). Includes wood, wood waste, wood liquors, peat, railroad ties, wood sludge, spent sulfite liquors, agricultural waste, straw, tires, fish oils, tall oil, sludge waste, waste alcohol, municipal solid waste, landfill gases, other waste, and ethanol blended into motor gasoline.

BIOGEOCHEMICAL CYCLE⁷

Natural processes that recycle nutrients in various chemical forms from the environment, to organisms, and then back to the environment. Examples are the carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and hydrologic cycles.

BIOLOGICAL OXYGEN DEMAND (BOD)⁷

Amount of dissolved oxygen needed by aerobic decomposers to break down the organic materials in a given volume of water at a certain temperature over a specified time period. See *BOD5*.

BIOMASS⁷

Total dry weight of all living organisms that can be supported at each trophic level in a food chain. Also, materials that are biological in origin, including organic material (both living and dead) from above and below ground, for example, trees, crops, grasses, tree litter, roots, and animals and animal waste.

BIOMASS ENERGY¹

Energy produced by combusting biomass materials such as wood. The carbon dioxide emitted from burning biomass will not increase total atmospheric carbon dioxide if this consumption is done on a sustainable basis (i.e., if in a given period of time, regrowth of biomass takes up as much carbon dioxide as is released from biomass combustion). Biomass energy is often suggested as a replacement for fossil fuel combustion.

BIOSPHERE^{2&7}

The living and dead organisms found near the Earth's surface in parts of the lithosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere. The part of the global carbon cycle that includes living organisms and biogenic organic matter.

BIOTIC⁷

Living. Living organisms make up the biotic parts of ecosystems. See *abiotic*.

BITUMEN⁷

Gooey, black, high-sulfur, heavy oil extracted from tar sand and then upgraded to synthetic fuel oil. See *tar sand*.

BITUMINOUS COAL²

A dense, black, soft coal, often with well-defined bands of bright and dull material. The most common coal, with moisture content usually less than 20 percent. Used for generating electricity, making coke, and space heating.

BOD5²

The biochemical oxygen demand of wastewater during decomposition occurring over a 5-day period. A measure of the organic content of wastewater. See *biological oxygen demand*.

BRITISH THERMAL UNIT (Btu)³

The quantity of heat required to raise the temperature of one pound of water one degree of Fahrenheit at or near 39.2 degrees Fahrenheit.

BUNKER FUEL²

Fuel supplied to ships and aircraft for international transportation, irrespective of the flag of the carrier, consisting primarily of residual and distillate fuel oil for ships and jet fuel for aircraft.

BUS^{6&8}

A rubber-tired, self-propelled, manually steered vehicle that is generally designed to transport 30 individuals or more. Bus types include intercity, school and transit.

CARBON BLACK²

An amorphous form of carbon, produced commercially by thermal or oxidative decomposition of hydrocarbons and used principally in rubber goods, pigments, and printer's ink.

CARBON CYCLE²

All carbon reservoirs and exchanges of carbon from reservoir to reservoir by various chemical, physical, geological, and biological processes. Usually thought of as a series of the four main reservoirs of carbon interconnected by pathways of exchange. The four reservoirs, regions of the Earth in which carbon behaves in a systematic manner, are the atmosphere, terrestrial biosphere (usually includes freshwater systems), oceans, and sediments (includes fossil fuels). Each of these global reservoirs may be subdivided into smaller pools, ranging in size from individual communities or ecosystems to the total of all living organisms (biota).

CARBON DIOXIDE²

A colorless, odorless, non-poisonous gas that is a normal part of the ambient air. Carbon dioxide is a product of fossil fuel combustion. Although carbon dioxide does not directly impair human health, it is a greenhouse gas that traps terrestrial (i.e., infrared) radiation and contributes to the potential for global warming. See *global warming*.

CARBON EQUIVALENT (CE)¹

A metric measure used to compare the emissions of the different greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential (GWP). Greenhouse gas emissions in the United States are most commonly expressed as "million metric tons of carbon equivalents" (MMTCE). Global warming potentials are used to convert greenhouse gases to carbon dioxide equivalents. See *global warming potential*, *greenhouse gas*.

CARBON FLUX⁹

The rate of exchange of carbon between pools (i.e., reservoirs).

CARBON INTENSITY

The relative amount of carbon emitted per unit of energy or fuels consumed.

CARBON POOL⁹

The reservoir containing carbon as a principal element in the geochemical cycle.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION¹

The uptake and storage of carbon. Trees and plants, for example, absorb carbon dioxide, release the oxygen and store the carbon. Fossil fuels were at one time biomass and continue to store the carbon until burned. See *carbon sinks*.

CARBON SINKS¹

Carbon reservoirs and conditions that take-in and store more carbon (i.e., carbon sequestration) than they release. Carbon sinks can serve to partially offset greenhouse gas emissions. Forests and oceans are large carbon sinks. See *carbon sequestration*.

CARBON TETRACHLORIDE (CCl₄)¹¹

A compound consisting of one carbon atom and four chlorine atoms. It is an ozone depleting substance. Carbon tetrachloride was widely used as a raw material in many industrial applications, including the production of chlorofluorocarbons, and as a solvent. Solvent use was ended in the United States when it was discovered to be carcinogenic. See *ozone depleting substance*.

CHEMICAL REACTION⁷

Interaction between chemicals in which there is a change in the chemical composition of the elements or compounds involved.

CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CFCs)⁷

Organic compounds made up of atoms of carbon, chlorine, and fluorine. An example is CFC-12 (CCl₂F₂), used as a refrigerant in refrigerators and air conditioners and as a foam blowing agent. Gaseous CFCs can deplete the ozone layer when they slowly rise into the stratosphere, are broken down by strong ultraviolet radiation, release chlorine atoms, and then react with ozone molecules. See *ozone depleting substance*.

CLIMATE^{18,9}

The average weather, usually taken over a 30 year time period, for a particular region and time period. Climate is not the same as weather, but rather, it is the average pattern of weather for a particular region. Weather describes the short-term state of the atmosphere. Climatic elements include precipitation, temperature, humidity, sunshine, wind velocity, phenomena such as fog, frost, and hailstorms, and other measures of the weather. See *weather*.

CLIMATE CHANGE¹

The term "climate change" is sometimes used to refer to all forms of climatic inconsistency, but because the Earth's climate is never static, the term is more properly used to imply a significant change from one climatic condition to another. In some cases, "climate change" has been used synonymously with the term, "global warming"; scientists however, tend to use the term in the wider sense to also include natural changes in climate. See *global warming, greenhouse effect, enhanced greenhouse effect, radiative forcing*.

CLIMATE FEEDBACK¹

An atmospheric, oceanic, terrestrial, or other process that is activated by direct climate change induced by

changes in radiative forcing. Climate feedbacks may increase (positive feedback) or diminish (negative feedback) the magnitude of the direct climate change.

CLIMATE LAG¹

The delay that occurs in climate change as a result of some factor that changes very slowly. For example, the effects of releasing more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere may not be known for some time because a large fraction is dissolved in the ocean and only released to the atmosphere many years later.

CLIMATE SENSITIVITY¹

The equilibrium response of the climate to a change in radiative forcing; for example, a doubling of the carbon dioxide concentration. See *radiative forcing*.

CLIMATE SYSTEM (OR EARTH SYSTEM)¹

The atmosphere, the oceans, the biosphere, the cryosphere, and the geosphere, together make up the climate system.

COAL²

A black or brownish black solid, combustible substance formed by the partial decomposition of vegetable matter without access to air. The rank of coal, which includes anthracite, bituminous coal, subbituminous coal, and lignite, is based on fixed carbon, volatile matter, and heating value. Coal rank indicates the progressive alteration, or coalification, from lignite to anthracite. See *anthracite, bituminous coal, subbituminous coal, lignite*.

COAL COKE²

A hard, porous product made from baking bituminous coal in ovens at temperatures as high as 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. It is used both as a fuel and as a reducing agent in smelting iron ore in a blast furnace.

COAL GASIFICATION⁷

Conversion of solid coal to synthetic natural gas (SNG) or a gaseous mixture that can be burned as a fuel.

COAL LIQUEFACTION⁷

Conversion of solid coal to a liquid fuel such as synthetic crude oil or methanol.

COALBED METHANE²

Methane that is produced from coalbeds in the same manner as natural gas produced from other strata. Methane is the principal component of natural gas.

CO-CONTROL BENEFIT¹⁰

The additional benefit derived from an environmental policy that is designed to control one type of pollution, while reducing the emissions of other pollutants as well. For example, a policy to reduce carbon dioxide emissions might reduce the combustion of coal, but when coal combustion is reduced, so too are the emissions of particulates and sulfur dioxide. The benefits associated with reductions in emissions of particulates and sulfur dioxide are the co-control benefits of carbon dioxide reductions.

COGENERATION⁷

Production of two useful forms of energy, such as high-temperature heat and electricity, from the same process.

COMBUSTION²

Chemical oxidation accompanied by the generation of light and heat.

COMMERCIAL SECTOR⁸

An area consisting of non-housing units such as non-manufacturing business establishments (e.g., wholesale and retail businesses), health and educational institutions, and government offices.

COMPOST⁷

Partially decomposed organic plant and animal matter that can be used as a soil conditioner or fertilizer.

COMPOSTING⁷

Partial breakdown of organic plant and animal matter by aerobic bacteria to produce a material that can be used as a soil conditioner or fertilizer. See *compost*.

COMPOUND⁷

Combination of two or more different chemical elements held together by chemical bonds. See *element*. See *inorganic compound*, *organic compound*.

CONCENTRATION⁷

Amount of a chemical in a particular volume or weight of air, water, soil, or other medium. See *parts per billion*, *parts per million*.

CONFERENCE OF PARTIES (COP)¹⁰

The supreme body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It comprises more than 170 nations that have ratified the Convention. Its first session was held in Berlin, Germany, in 1995, and it is expected to continue meeting on a yearly basis. The COP's role is to promote and review the implementation of the Convention. It will periodically review existing commitments in light of the Convention's objective, new scientific findings, and the effectiveness of national climate change programs. See *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

CONIFER⁷

See *coniferous trees*.

CONIFEROUS TREES⁷

Cone-bearing trees, mostly evergreens, that have needle-shaped or scale-like leaves. They produce wood known commercially as softwood. See *deciduous trees*.

CRITERIA POLLUTANT²

A pollutant determined to be hazardous to human health and regulated under EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The 1970 amendments to the Clean Air Act require EPA to describe the health and welfare impacts of a pollutant as the "criteria" for inclusion in the regulatory regime. In this report, emissions of the criteria pollutants CO, NO_x, NMVOCs, and SO₂ are reported because they are thought to be precursors to greenhouse gas formation.

CROP RESIDUE²

Organic residue remaining after the harvesting and processing of a crop.

CROP ROTATION⁷

Planting the same field or areas of fields with different crops from year to year to reduce depletion of soil nutrients. Plants such as corn, tobacco, or cotton, which remove large amounts of nitrogen from the soil, are planted one year. The next year legumes such as soybeans, which add nitrogen to the soil, are planted.

CRUDE OIL²

A mixture of hydrocarbons that exist in liquid phase in underground reservoirs and remain liquid at atmospheric pressure after passing through surface separating facilities. See *petroleum*.

DECIDUOUS TREES⁷

Trees such as oaks and maples that lose their leaves during part of the year. See *coniferous trees*.

DECOMPOSITION⁹

The breakdown of matter by bacteria and fungi. It changes the chemical composition and physical appearance of the materials.

DEFORESTATION¹

Those practices or processes that result in the conversion of forested lands for non-forest uses. This is often cited as one of the major causes of the enhanced greenhouse effect for two reasons: 1) the burning or decomposition of the wood releases carbon dioxide; and 2) trees that once removed carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in the process of photosynthesis are no longer present.

DEGRADABLE⁷

See *biodegradable*.

DESERTIFICATION¹

The progressive destruction or degradation of existing vegetative cover to form a desert. This can occur due to overgrazing, deforestation, drought, and the burning of extensive areas. Once formed, deserts can only support a sparse range of vegetation. Climatic effects associated with this phenomenon include increased reflectivity of solar radiation, reduced atmospheric humidity, and greater atmospheric dust (aerosol) loading.

DISTILLATE FUEL OIL²

A general classification for the petroleum fractions produced in conventional distillation operations. Included are products known as No. 1, No. 2, and No. 4 fuel oils and No. 1, No. 2, and No. 4 diesel fuels. Used primarily for space heating, on and off-highway diesel engine fuel (including railroad engine fuel and fuel for agricultural machinery), and electric power generation.

ECONOMY⁷

System of production, distribution, and consumption of economic goods.

ECOSYSTEM¹⁰

The complex system of plant, animal, fungal, and microorganism communities and their associated non-living environment interacting as an ecological unit. Ecosystems have no fixed boundaries; instead their parameters are set to the scientific, management, or policy question being examined. Depending upon the purpose of analysis, a single lake, a watershed, or an entire region could be considered an ecosystem.

ELECTRONS⁷

Tiny particles moving around outside the nucleus of an atom. Each electron has one unit of negative charge (-) and almost no mass.

ELEMENT⁷

Chemicals such as hydrogen (H), iron (Fe), sodium (Na), carbon (C), nitrogen (N), or oxygen (O), whose distinctly different atoms serve as the basic building blocks of all matter. There are 92 naturally occurring elements. Another 15 have been made in laboratories. Two or more elements combine to form compounds that make up most of the world's matter. See *compound*.

EMISSION INVENTORY

A list of air pollutants emitted into a community's, state's, nation's, or the Earth's atmosphere in amounts per some unit time (e.g. day or year) by type of source. An emission inventory has both political and scientific applications.

EMISSIONS COEFFICIENT/FACTOR²

A unique value for scaling emissions to activity data in terms of a standard rate of emissions per unit of activity (e.g., grams of carbon dioxide emitted per barrel of fossil fuel consumed).

EMISSIONS²

Releases of gases to the atmosphere (e.g., the release of carbon dioxide during fuel combustion). Emissions can be either intended or unintended releases. See *fugitive emissions*.

ENERGY CONSERVATION⁷

Reduction or elimination of unnecessary energy use and waste. See *energy-efficiency*.

ENERGY INTENSITY⁵

Ratio between the consumption of energy to a given quantity of output; usually refers to the amount of primary or final energy consumed per unit of gross domestic product.

ENERGY QUALITY⁷

Ability of a form of energy to do useful work. High-temperature heat and the chemical energy in fossil fuels and nuclear fuels are concentrated high quality energy. Low-quality energy such as low-temperature heat is dispersed or diluted and cannot do much useful work.

ENERGY³

The capacity for doing work as measured by the capability of doing work (potential energy) or the conversion of this capability to motion (kinetic energy). Energy has several forms, some of which are easily convertible and can be changed to another form useful for work. Most of the world's convertible energy comes from fossil fuels that are burned to produce heat that is then used as a transfer medium to mechanical or other means in order to accomplish tasks. In the United States, electrical energy is often measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh), while heat energy is often measured in British thermal units (Btu).

ENERGY-EFFICIENCY^{6&8}

The ratio of the useful output of services from an article of industrial equipment to the energy use by such an article; for example, vehicle miles traveled per gallon of fuel (mpg).

ENHANCED GREENHOUSE EFFECT¹

The concept that the natural greenhouse effect has been enhanced by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases. Increased concentrations of carbon dioxide,

methane, and nitrous oxide, CFCs, HFCs, PFCs, SF₆, NF₃, and other photochemically important gases caused by human activities such as fossil fuel consumption, trap more infra-red radiation, thereby exerting a warming influence on the climate. See *greenhouse gas, anthropogenic, greenhouse effect, climate*.

ENHANCED OIL RECOVERY⁷

Removal of some of the heavy oil left in an oil well after primary and secondary recovery. See *primary oil recovery, secondary oil recovery*.

ENTERIC FERMENTATION²

A digestive process by which carbohydrates are broken down by microorganisms into simple molecules for absorption into the bloodstream of an animal.

ENVIRONMENT⁷

All external conditions that affect an organism or other specified system during its lifetime.

ETHANOL (C₂H₅OH)⁹

Otherwise known as ethyl alcohol, alcohol, or grain spirit. A clear, colorless, flammable oxygenated hydrocarbon with a boiling point of 78.5 degrees Celsius in the anhydrous state. In transportation, ethanol is used as a vehicle fuel by itself (E100), blended with gasoline (E85), or as a gasoline octane enhancer and oxygenate (10 percent concentration).

EVAPOTRANSPIRATION¹⁰

The loss of water from the soil by evaporation and by transpiration from the plants growing in the soil, which rises with air temperature.

EXPONENTIAL GROWTH⁷

Growth in which some quantity, such as population size, increases by a constant percentage of the whole during each year or other time period; when the increase in quantity over time is plotted, this type of growth yields a curve shaped like the letter J.

FEEDLOT⁷

Confined outdoor or indoor space used to raise hundreds to thousands of domesticated livestock. See *rangeland*.

FERTILIZATION, CARBON DIOXIDE¹

An expression (sometimes reduced to "fertilization") used to denote increased plant growth due to a higher carbon dioxide concentration.

FERTILIZER⁷

Substance that adds inorganic or organic plant nutrients to soil and improves its ability to grow crops, trees, or other vegetation. See *organic fertilizer*.

FLARING⁹

The burning of waste gases through a flare stack or other device before releasing them to the air.

FLUIDIZED BED COMBUSTION (FBC)⁷

Process for burning coal more efficiently, cleanly, and cheaply. A stream of hot air is used to suspend a mixture of powdered coal and limestone during combustion. About 90 to 98 percent of the sulfur dioxide produced during combustion is removed by reaction with limestone to produce solid calcium sulfate.

FLUOROCARBONS¹

Carbon-fluorine compounds that often contain other elements such as hydrogen, chlorine, or bromine. Common fluorocarbons include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and perfluorocarbons (PFCs). See *chlorofluorocarbons*, *hydrochlorofluorocarbons*, *hydrofluorocarbons*, *perfluorocarbons*.

FORCING MECHANISM¹

A process that alters the energy balance of the climate system (i.e., changes the relative balance between incoming solar radiation and outgoing infrared radiation from Earth). Such mechanisms include changes in solar irradiance, volcanic eruptions, and enhancement of the natural greenhouse effect by emission of carbon dioxide.

FOREST⁷

Terrestrial ecosystem (biome) with enough average annual precipitation (at least 76 centimeters or 30 inches) to support growth of various species of trees and smaller forms of vegetation.

FOSSIL FUEL

A general term for buried combustible geologic deposits of organic materials, formed from decayed plants and animals that have been converted to crude oil, coal, natural gas, or heavy oils by exposure to heat and pressure in the Earth's crust over hundreds of millions of years. See *coal*, *petroleum*, *crude oil*, *natural gas*.

FOSSIL FUEL COMBUSTION¹

Burning of coal, oil (including gasoline), or natural gas. The burning needed to generate energy release carbon dioxide by-products that can include unburned hydrocarbons, methane, and carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide, methane, and many of the unburned hydrocarbons slowly oxidize into carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Common sources of fossil fuel combustion include cars and electric utilities.

FREON

See *chlorofluorocarbon*.

FUGITIVE EMISSIONS²

Unintended gas leaks from the processing, transmission, and/or transportation of fossil fuels, CFCs from refrigeration leaks, SF₆ from electrical power distributor, etc.

GASOHOL⁷

Vehicle fuel consisting of a mixture of gasoline and ethyl or methyl alcohol; typically 10 to 23 percent ethanol by volume.

GENERAL AVIATION⁸

That portion of civil aviation, which encompasses all facets of aviation except air carriers. It includes any air taxis, commuter air carriers, and air travel clubs, which do not hold Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity. See *air carriers*.

GENERAL CIRCULATION MODEL (GCM)¹

A global, three-dimensional computer model of the climate system which can be used to simulate human-induced climate change. GCMs are highly complex and they represent the effects of such factors as reflective and absorptive properties of atmospheric water vapor, greenhouse gas concentrations, clouds, annual and daily

solar heating, ocean temperatures and ice boundaries. The most recent GCMs include global representations of the atmosphere, oceans, and land surface.

GEOSPHERE¹

The soils, sediments, and rock layers of the Earth's crust, both continental and beneath the ocean floors.

GEOTHERMAL ENERGY⁷

Heat transferred from the Earth's molten core to underground deposits of dry steam (steam with no water droplets), wet steam (a mixture of steam and water droplets), hot water, or rocks lying fairly close to the Earth's surface.

GLOBAL WARMING POTENTIAL (GWP)¹

The index used to translate the level of emissions of various gases into a common measure in order to compare the relative radiative forcing of different gases without directly calculating the changes in atmospheric concentrations. GWPs are calculated as the ratio of the radiative forcing that would result from the emissions of one kilogram of a greenhouse gas to that from the emission of one kilogram of carbon dioxide over a period of time (usually 100 years). Gases involved in complex atmospheric chemical processes have not been assigned GWPs. See *lifetime*.

GLOBAL WARMING¹⁰

The progressive gradual rise of the Earth's surface temperature thought to be caused by the greenhouse effect and responsible for changes in global climate patterns. See *enhanced greenhouse effect*, *greenhouse effect*, *climate change*.

GRASSLAND⁷

Terrestrial ecosystem (biome) found in regions where moderate annual average precipitation (25 to 76 centimeters or 10 to 30 inches) is enough to support the growth of grass and small plants but not enough to support large stands of trees.

GREENHOUSE EFFECT⁷

Trapping and build-up of heat in the atmosphere (troposphere) near the Earth's surface. Some of the heat flowing back toward space from the Earth's surface is absorbed by water vapor, carbon dioxide, ozone, and several other gases in the atmosphere and then reradiated back toward the Earth's surface. If the atmospheric concentrations of these greenhouse gases rise, the average temperature of the lower atmosphere will gradually increase. See *enhanced greenhouse effect*, *climate change*, *global warming*.

GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG)¹

Any gas that absorbs infrared radiation in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases include, but are not limited to, water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), ozone (O₃), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆). See *carbon dioxide*, *methane*, *nitrous oxide*, *hydrochlorofluorocarbon*, *ozone*, *hydrofluorocarbon*, *perfluorocarbon*, *sulfur hexafluoride*.

HALOCARBONS¹

Chemicals consisting of carbon, sometimes hydrogen, and either chlorine, fluorine, bromine or iodine.

HALONS¹

Compounds, also known as bromofluorocarbons, that contain bromine, fluorine, and carbon. They are generally used as fire extinguishing agents and cause ozone depletion. Bromine is many times more effective at destroying stratospheric ozone than chlorine. See *ozone depleting substance*.

HEAT CONTENT⁵

The amount of heat per unit mass released upon complete combustion.

HEAT⁷

Form of kinetic energy that flows from one body to another when there is a temperature difference between the two bodies. Heat always flows spontaneously from a hot sample of matter to a colder sample of matter. This is one way to state the second law of thermodynamics. See *temperature*.

HIGHER HEATING VALUE⁵

Quantity of heat liberated by the complete combustion of a unit volume or weight of a fuel assuming that the produced water vapor is completely condensed and the heat is recovered; also known as gross calorific value. See *lower heating value*.

HISTOSOL⁹

Wet organic soils, such as peats and mucks.

HYDROCARBONS¹

Substances containing only hydrogen and carbon. Fossil fuels are made up of hydrocarbons. Some hydrocarbon compounds are major air pollutants.

HYDROCHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (HCFCs)¹

Compounds containing hydrogen, fluorine, chlorine, and carbon atoms. Although ozone depleting substances, they are less potent at destroying stratospheric ozone than chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). They have been introduced as temporary replacements for CFCs and are also greenhouse gases. See *ozone depleting substance*.

HYDROELECTRIC POWER PLANT¹

Structure in which the energy of fading or flowing water spins a turbine generator to produce electricity.

HYDROFLUOROCARBONS (HFCs)⁷

Compounds containing only hydrogen, fluorine, and carbon atoms. They were introduced as alternatives to ozone depleting substances in serving many industrial, commercial, and personal needs. HFCs are emitted as by-products of industrial processes and are also used in manufacturing. They do not significantly deplete the stratospheric ozone layer, but they are powerful greenhouse gases with global warming potentials ranging from 140 (HFC-152a) to 11,700 (HFC-23).

HYDROLOGIC CYCLE

The process of evaporation, vertical and horizontal transport of vapor, condensation, precipitation, and the flow of water from continents to oceans. It is a major factor in determining climate through its influence on surface vegetation, the clouds, snow and ice, and soil moisture. The hydrologic cycle is responsible for 25 to 30 percent of the mid-latitudes' heat transport from the equatorial to polar regions.

HYDROPOWER⁷

Electrical energy produced by falling or flowing water. See *hydroelectric power plant*.

HYDROSPHERE⁷

All the Earth's liquid water (oceans, smaller bodies of fresh water, and underground aquifers), frozen water (polar ice caps, floating ice, and frozen upper layer of soil known as permafrost), and small amounts of water vapor in the atmosphere.

INDUSTRIAL SECTOR⁸

Construction, manufacturing, agricultural and mining establishments.

INFRARED RADIATION¹

The heat energy that is emitted from all solids, liquids, and gases. In the context of the greenhouse issue, the term refers to the heat energy emitted by the Earth's surface and its atmosphere. Greenhouse gases strongly absorb this radiation in the Earth's atmosphere, and re-radiate some of it back towards the surface, creating the greenhouse effect.

INORGANIC COMPOUND⁷

Combination of two or more elements other than those used to form organic compounds. See *organic compound*.

INORGANIC FERTILIZER⁷

See *synthetic fertilizer*.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC)¹

The IPCC was established jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization in 1988. The purpose of the IPCC is to assess information in the scientific and technical literature related to all significant components of the issue of climate change. The IPCC draws upon hundreds of the world's expert scientists as authors and thousands as expert reviewers. Leading experts on climate change and environmental, social, and economic sciences from some 60 nations have helped the IPCC to prepare periodic assessments of the scientific underpinnings for understanding global climate change and its consequences. With its capacity for reporting on climate change, its consequences, and the viability of adaptation and mitigation measures, the IPCC is also looked to as the official advisory body to the world's governments on the state of the science of the climate change issue. For example, the IPCC organized the development of internationally accepted methods for conducting national greenhouse gas emission inventories.

IRREVERSIBILITIES¹⁰

Changes that, once set in motion, cannot be reversed, at least on human time scales.

JET FUEL⁸

Includes both naphtha-type and kerosene-type fuels meeting standards for use in aircraft turbine engines. Although most jet fuel is used in aircraft, some is used for other purposes such as generating electricity.

JOULE¹

The energy required to push with a force of one Newton for one meter.

KEROGEN⁷

Solid, waxy mixture of hydrocarbons found in oil shale, with a fine grained sedimentary rock. When the rock is heated to high temperatures, the kerogen is vaporized. The vapor is condensed and then sent to a refinery to produce gasoline, heating oil, and other products. See *oil shale, shale oil*.

KEROSENE²

A petroleum distillate that has a maximum distillation temperature of 401 degrees Fahrenheit at the 10 percent recovery point, a final boiling point of 572 degrees Fahrenheit, and a minimum flash point of 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Used in space heaters, cookstoves, and water heaters, and suitable for use as an illuminant when burned in wick lamps.

KYOTO PROTOCOL¹⁰

An international agreement struck by 159 nations attending the Third Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (held in December of 1997 in Kyoto, Japan) to reduce worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases. If ratified and put into force, individual countries have committed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a specified amount. See *Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of Parties*.

LANDFILL⁷

Land waste disposal site in which waste is generally spread in thin layers, compacted, and covered with a fresh layer of soil each day.

LIFETIME (ATMOSPHERIC)¹

The lifetime of a greenhouse gas refers to the approximate amount of time it would take for the anthropogenic increment to an atmospheric pollutant concentration to return to its natural level (assuming emissions cease) as a result of either being converted to another chemical compound or being taken out of the atmosphere via a sink. This time depends on the pollutant's sources and sinks as well as its reactivity. The lifetime of a pollutant is often considered in conjunction with the mixing of pollutants in the atmosphere; a long lifetime will allow the pollutant to mix throughout the atmosphere. Average lifetimes can vary from about a week (e.g., sulfate aerosols) to more than a century (e.g., CFCs, carbon dioxide). See *residence time*.

LIGHT-DUTY VEHICLES⁸

Automobiles and light trucks combined.

LIGNITE²

A brownish-black coal of low rank with high inherent moisture and volatile matter content, used almost exclusively for electric power generation. Also referred to as brown coal.

LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG)⁷

Natural gas converted to liquid form by cooling to a very low temperature.

LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS (LPG)²

Ethane, ethylene, propane, propylene, normal butane, butylene, and isobutane produced at refineries or natural gas processing plants, including plants that fractionate new natural gas plant liquids.

LITTER⁹

Undecomposed plant residues on the soil surface. See *decomposition*.

LONGWAVE RADIATION⁹

The radiation emitted in the spectral wavelength greater than 4 micrometers corresponding to the radiation emitted from the Earth and atmosphere. It is sometimes referred to as terrestrial radiation or infrared radiation, although somewhat imprecisely. See *infrared radiation*.

LOW EMISSION VEHICLE (LEV)⁸

A vehicle meeting the low-emission vehicle standards.

LOWER HEATING VALUE⁵

Quantity of heat liberated by the complete combustion of a unit volume or weight of a fuel assuming that the produced water remains as a vapor and the heat of the vapor is not recovered; also known as net calorific value. See *higher heating value*.

LUBRICANT²

A substance used to reduce friction between bearing surfaces or as a process material, either incorporated into other materials used as aids in manufacturing processes, or as carriers of other materials. Petroleum lubricants may be produced either from distillates or residues. Other substances may be added to impart or improve useful properties. Does not include by-products of lubricating oil from solvent extraction or tars derived from de-asphalting. Lubricants include all grades of lubricating oils from spindle oil to cylinder oil and those used in greases. Lubricant categories are paraffinic and naphthenic.

MANURE⁷

Dung and urine of animals that can be used as a form of organic fertilizer.

MASS BALANCE⁹

The application of the principle of the conservation of matter.

MAUNA LOA⁹

An intermittently active volcano 13,680 feet (4,170 meters) high in Hawaii.

METHANE (CH₄)¹

A hydrocarbon that is a greenhouse gas with a global warming potential most recently estimated at 21. Methane is produced through anaerobic (without oxygen) decomposition of waste in landfills, animal digestion, decomposition of animal wastes, production and distribution of natural gas and petroleum, coal production, and incomplete fossil fuel combustion. The atmospheric concentration of methane has been shown to be increasing at a rate of about 0.6 percent per year and the concentration of about 1.7 per million by volume (ppmv) is more than twice its pre-industrial value. However, the rate of increase of methane in the atmosphere may be stabilizing.

METHANOL (CH₃OH)⁸

A colorless, poisonous liquid with essentially no odor and little taste. It is the simplest alcohol with a boiling point of 64.7 degrees Celsius. In transportation, methanol is used as a vehicle fuel by itself (M100), or blended with gasoline (M85).

METHANOTROPHIC⁷

Having the biological capacity to oxidize methane to CO₂ and water by metabolism under aerobic conditions. See *aerobic*.

METHYL BROMIDE (CH₃Br)¹¹

An effective pesticide; used to fumigate soil and many agricultural products. Because it contains bromine, it depletes stratospheric ozone when released to the atmosphere. See *ozone depleting substance*.

METRIC TON¹

Common international measurement for the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions. A metric ton is equal to 1000 kilograms, 2204.6 pounds, or 1.1023 short tons.

MINERAL⁷

Any naturally occurring inorganic substance found in the Earth's crust as a crystalline solid.

MODEL YEAR⁸

Refers to the "sales" model year; for example, vehicles sold during the period from October 1 to the next September 31 is considered one model year.

MOLECULE⁷

Chemical combination of two or more atoms of the same chemical element (such as O₂) or different chemical elements (such as H₂O).

MONTREAL PROTOCOL ON SUBSTANCES THAT DEplete THE OZONE LAYER¹¹

The Montreal Protocol and its amendments control the phaseout of ozone depleting substances production and use. Under the Protocol, several international organizations report on the science of ozone depletion, implement projects to help move away from ozone depleting substances, and provide a forum for policy discussions. In the United States, the Protocol is implemented under the rubric of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. See *ozone depleting substance*, *ozone layer*.

MOTOR GASOLINE²

A complex mixture of relatively volatile hydrocarbons, with or without small quantities of additives, obtained by blending appropriate refinery streams to form a fuel suitable for use in spark-ignition engines. Motor gasoline includes both leaded and unleaded grades of finished gasoline, blending components, and gasohol.

MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE (MSW)²

Residential solid waste and some non-hazardous commercial, institutional, and industrial wastes. This material is generally sent to municipal landfills for disposal. See *landfill*.

NAPHTHA²

A generic term applied to a petroleum fraction with an approximate boiling range between 122 and 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

NATURAL GAS⁷

Underground deposits of gases consisting of 50 to 90 percent methane (CH₄) and small amounts of heavier gaseous hydrocarbon compounds such as propane (C₃H₈) and butane (C₄H₁₀).

NATURAL GAS LIQUIDS (NGLs)²

Those hydrocarbons in natural gas that are separated as liquids from the gas. Includes natural gas plant liquids and lease condensate.

NITROGEN CYCLE⁷

Cyclic movement of nitrogen in different chemical forms from the environment, to organisms, and then back to the environment.

NITROGEN FIXATION⁷

Conversion of atmospheric nitrogen gas into forms useful to plants and other organisms by lightning, bacteria, and blue-green algae; it is part of the nitrogen cycle.

NITROGEN OXIDES (NO_x)¹

Gases consisting of one molecule of nitrogen and varying numbers of oxygen molecules. Nitrogen oxides are produced, for example, by the combustion of fossil fuels in vehicles and electric power plants. In the atmosphere, nitrogen oxides can contribute to formation of photochemical ozone (smog), impair visibility, and have health consequences; they are considered pollutants.

NITROUS OXIDE (N₂O)¹

A powerful greenhouse gas with a global warming potential most recently evaluated at 310. Major sources of nitrous oxide include soil cultivation practices, especially the use of commercial and organic fertilizers, fossil fuel combustion, nitric acid production, and biomass burning.

NONBIODEGRADABLE⁷

Substance that cannot be broken down in the environment by natural processes. See *biodegradable*.

NONLINEARITIES¹⁰

Occur when changes in one variable cause a more than proportionate impact on another variable.

NON-METHANE VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (NMVOCs)²

Organic compounds, other than methane, that participate in atmospheric photochemical reactions.

NON-POINT SOURCE⁷

Large land area such as crop fields and urban areas that discharge pollutant into surface and underground water over a large area. See *point source*.

NUCLEAR ELECTRIC POWER³

Electricity generated by an electric power plant whose turbines are driven by steam generated in a reactor by heat from the fissioning of nuclear fuel.

NUCLEAR ENERGY⁷

Energy released when atomic nuclei undergo a nuclear reaction such as the spontaneous emission of radioactivity, nuclear fission, or nuclear fusion.

OIL SHALE⁷

Underground formation of a fine-grained sedimentary rock containing varying amounts of kerogen, a solid, waxy mixture of hydrocarbon compounds. Heating the rock to high temperatures converts the kerogen to a vapor, which can be condensed to form a slow flowing heavy oil called shale oil. See *kerogen*, *shale oil*.

OIL

See *crude oil*, *petroleum*.

ORE⁷

Mineral deposit containing a high enough concentration of at least one metallic element to permit the metal to be extracted and sold at a profit.

ORGANIC COMPOUND⁷

Molecule that contains atoms of the element carbon, usually combined with itself and with atoms of one or more other element such as hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur, phosphorus, chlorine, or fluorine. See *inorganic compound*.

ORGANIC FERTILIZER⁷

Organic material such as manure or compost, applied to cropland as a source of plant nutrients.

OXIDIZE²

To chemically transform a substance by combining it with oxygen.

OXYGEN CYCLE⁷

Cyclic movement of oxygen in different chemical forms from the environment, to organisms, and then back to the environment.

OZONE⁶

A colorless gas with a pungent odor, having the molecular form of O₃, found in two layers of the atmosphere, the stratosphere and the troposphere. Ozone is a form of oxygen found naturally in the stratosphere that provides a protective layer shielding the Earth from ultraviolet radiation's harmful health effects on humans and the environment. In the troposphere, ozone is a chemical oxidant and major component of photochemical smog. Ozone can seriously affect the human respiratory system.

OZONE DEPLETING SUBSTANCE (ODS)¹¹

A family of man-made compounds that includes, but is not limited to, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), bromofluorocarbons (halons), methyl chloroform, carbon tetrachloride, methyl bromide, and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). These compounds have been shown to deplete stratospheric ozone, and therefore are typically referred to as ODSs.

OZONE LAYER⁷

Layer of gaseous ozone (O₃) in the stratosphere that protects life on Earth by filtering out harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun. See *stratosphere, ultraviolet radiation*.

OZONE PRECURSORS²

Chemical compounds, such as carbon monoxide, methane, non-methane hydrocarbons, and nitrogen oxides, which in the presence of solar radiation react with other chemical compounds to form ozone, mainly in the troposphere. See *troposphere*.

PARTICULATE MATTER (PM)⁷

Solid particles or liquid droplets suspended or carried in the air.

PARTICULATES

See *particulate matter*.

PARTS PER BILLION (ppb)⁷

Number of parts of a chemical found in one billion parts of a particular gas, liquid, or solid mixture. See *concentration*.

PARTS PER MILLION (ppm)⁷

Number of parts of a chemical found in one million parts of a particular gas, liquid, or solid. See *concentration*.

PENTANES PLUS²

A mixture of hydrocarbons, mostly pentanes and heavier fractions, extracted from natural gas.

PERFLUOROCARBONS (PFCs)¹

A group of human-made chemicals composed of carbon and fluorine only. These chemicals (predominantly CF₄ and C₂F₆) were introduced as alternatives, along with hydrofluorocarbons, to the ozone-depleting substances. In addition, PFCs are emitted as by-products of industrial processes and are also used in manufacturing. PFCs do not harm the stratospheric ozone layer, but they are powerful greenhouse gases: CF₄ has a global warming potential (GWP) of 6,500 and C₂F₆ has a GWP of 9,200.

PETROCHEMICAL FEEDSTOCK²

Feedstock derived from petroleum, used principally for the manufacture of chemicals, synthetic rubber, and a variety of plastics. The categories reported are naphtha (endpoint less than 401 degrees Fahrenheit) and other oils (endpoint equal to or greater than 401 degrees Fahrenheit).

PETROCHEMICALS⁷

Chemicals obtained by refining (i.e., distilling) crude oil. They are used as raw materials in the manufacture of most industrial chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, plastics, synthetic fibers, paints, medicines, and many other products. See *crude oil*.

PETROLEUM COKE²

A residue that is the final product of the condensation process in cracking.

PETROLEUM²

A generic term applied to oil and oil products in all forms, such as crude oil, lease condensate, unfinished oils, petroleum products, natural gas plant liquids, and non-hydrocarbon compounds blended into finished petroleum products. See *crude oil*.

PHOTOSYNTHESIS⁷

Complex process that takes place in living green plant cells. Radiant energy from the sun is used to combine carbon dioxide (CO₂) and water (H₂O) to produce oxygen (O₂) and simple nutrient molecules, such as glucose (C₆H₁₂O₆).

PHOTOVOLTAIC AND SOLAR THERMAL ENERGY²

Energy radiated by the sun as electromagnetic waves (electromagnetic radiation) that is converted into electricity by means of solar (i.e., photovoltaic) cells or useable heat by concentrating (i.e., focusing) collectors.

POINT SOURCE⁷

A single identifiable source that discharges pollutants into the environment. Examples are smokestack, sewer, ditch, or pipe. See *non-point source*.

POLLUTION⁷

A change in the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of the air, water, or soil that can affect the health, survival, or activities of humans in an unwanted way. Some expand the term to include harmful effects on all forms of life.

POLYVINYL CHLORIDE (PVC)²

A polymer of vinyl chloride. It is tasteless, odorless and insoluble in most organic solvents. A member of the family vinyl resin, used in soft flexible films for food packaging and in molded rigid products, such as pipes, fibers, upholstery, and bristles.

POPULATION⁷

Group of individual organisms of the same species living within a particular area.

PRESCRIBED BURNING⁷

Deliberate setting and careful control of surface fires in forests to help prevent more destructive fires and to kill off unwanted plants that compete with commercial species for plant nutrients; may also be used on grasslands.

PRIMARY OIL RECOVERY⁷

Pumping out the crude oil that flows by gravity into the bottom of an oil well. See *enhanced oil recovery, secondary oil recovery*.

QUAD⁸

Quad stands for quadrillion, which is, 10¹⁵.

RADIATION¹

Energy emitted in the form of electromagnetic waves. Radiation has differing characteristics depending upon the wavelength. Because the radiation from the Sun is relatively energetic, it has a short wavelength (e.g., ultraviolet, visible, and near infrared) while energy re-radiated from the Earth's surface and the atmosphere has a longer wavelength (e.g., infrared radiation) because the Earth is cooler than the Sun. See *ultraviolet radiation, infrared radiation, solar radiation, longwave radiation, terrestrial radiation*.

RADIATIVE FORCING¹

A change in the balance between incoming solar radiation and outgoing infrared (i.e., thermal) radiation. Without any radiative forcing, solar radiation coming to the Earth would continue to be approximately equal to the infrared radiation emitted from the Earth. The addition of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere traps an increased fraction of the infrared radiation, reradiating it back toward the surface of the Earth and thereby creates a warming influence.

RAIL⁸

Includes "heavy" and "light" transit rail. Heavy transit rail is characterized by exclusive rights-of-way, multi-car trains, high speed rapid acceleration, sophisticated signaling, and high platform loading. Also known as subway, elevated railway, or metropolitan railway (metro). Light transit rail may be on exclusive or shared rights of way, high or low platform, multi-car trains or single cars, automated or manually operated. In generic usage, light rail includes streetcars, trolley cars, and tramways.

RANGELAND⁷

Land, mostly grasslands, whose plants can provide food (i.e., forage) for grazing or browsing animals. See *feedlot*.

RECYCLING⁷

Collecting and reprocessing a resource so it can be used again. An example is collecting aluminum cans, melting them down, and using the aluminum to make new cans or other aluminum products.

REFORESTATION²

Replanting of forests on lands that have recently been harvested.

RENEWABLE ENERGY²

Energy obtained from sources that are essentially inexhaustible, unlike, for example, fossil fuels, of which there is a finite supply. Renewable sources of energy include wood, waste, geothermal, wind, photovoltaic, and solar thermal energy. See *hydropower, photovoltaic*.

RESIDENCE TIME¹

Average time spent in a reservoir by an individual atom or molecule. Also, this term is used to define the age of a molecule when it leaves the reservoir. With respect to greenhouse gases, residence time usually refers to how long a particular molecule remains in the atmosphere. See *lifetime*.

RESIDENTIAL SECTOR³

An area or portion consisting only of housing units.

RESIDUAL FUEL OIL²

The heavier oils that remain after the distillate fuel oils and lighter hydrocarbons are distilled away in refinery operations and that conform to ASTM Specifications D396 and D975. Included are No. 5, a residual fuel oil of medium viscosity; Navy Special, for use in steam-powered vessels in government service and in shore power plants; and No. 6, which includes Bunker C fuel oil and is used for commercial and industrial heating, electricity generation, and to power ships. Imports of residual fuel oil include imported crude oil burned as fuel.

SECONDARY OIL RECOVERY⁷

Injection of water into an oil well after primary oil recovery to force out some of the remaining thicker crude oil. See *enhanced oil recovery, primary oil recovery*.

SECTOR

Division, most commonly used to denote type of energy consumer (e.g., residential) or according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the type of greenhouse gas emitter (e.g., industrial process). See *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*.

SEPTIC TANK⁷

Underground tank for treatment of wastewater from a home in rural and suburban areas. Bacteria in the tank decompose organic wastes and the sludge settles to the bottom of the tank. The effluent flows out of the tank into the ground through a field of drainpipes.

SEWAGE TREATMENT (PRIMARY)⁷

Mechanical treatment of sewage in which large solids are filtered out by screens and suspended solids settle out as sludge in a sedimentation tank.

SHALE OIL⁷

Slow-flowing, dark brown, heavy oil obtained when kerosene in oil shale is vaporized at high temperatures and then condensed. Shale oil can be refined to yield gasoline, heating oil, and other petroleum products. See *kerosene, oil shale*.

SHORT TON¹

Common measurement for a ton in the United States. A short ton is equal to 2,000 lbs. or 0.907 metric tons.

SINK¹

A reservoir that uptakes a pollutant from another part of its cycle. Soil and trees tend to act as natural sinks for carbon.

SLUDGE⁷

Goosey solid mixture of bacteria and virus laden organic matter, toxic metals, synthetic organic chemicals, and solid chemicals removed from wastewater at a sewage treatment plant.

SOIL⁷

Complex mixture of inorganic minerals (i.e., mostly clay, silt, and sand), decaying organic matter, water, air, and living organisms.

SOIL CARBON⁹

A major component of the terrestrial biosphere pool in the carbon cycle. The amount of carbon in the soil is a function of the historical vegetative cover and productivity, which in turn is dependent in part upon climatic variables.

SOLAR ENERGY⁷

Direct radiant energy from the sun. It also includes indirect forms of energy such as wind, falling or flowing water (hydropower), ocean thermal gradients, and biomass, which are produced when direct solar energy interact with the Earth. See *solar radiation*.

SOLAR RADIATION¹

Energy from the Sun. Also referred to as short-wave radiation. Of importance to the climate system, solar radiation includes ultra-violet radiation, visible radiation, and infrared radiation.

SOURCE⁴

Any process or activity that releases a greenhouse gas, an aerosol, or a precursor of a greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

SPECIAL NAPHTHA²

All finished products within the naphtha boiling range that are used as paint thinners, cleaners, or solvents. Those products are refined to a specified flash point.

STILL GAS²

Any form or mixture of gases produced in refineries by distillation, cracking, reforming, and other processes. Principal constituents are methane, ethane, ethylene, normal butane, butylene, propane, propylene, etc. Used as a refinery fuel and as a petrochemical feedstock.

STRATOSPHERE⁷

Second layer of the atmosphere, extending from about 19 to 48 kilometers (12 to 30 miles) above the Earth's surface. It contains small amounts of gaseous ozone (O₃), which filters out about 99 percent of the incoming harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Most commercial airline flights operate at a cruising altitude in the lower stratosphere. See *ozone layer*, *ultraviolet radiation*.

STRATOSPHERIC OZONE

See *ozone layer*.

STRIP MINING⁷

Cutting deep trenches to remove minerals such as coal and phosphate found near the Earth's surface in flat or rolling terrain. See *surface mining*.

SUBBITUMINOUS COAL²

A dull, black coal of rank intermediate between lignite and bituminous coal.

SULFUR CYCLE⁷

Cyclic movement of sulfur in different chemical forms from the environment, to organisms, and then back to the environment.

SULFUR DIOXIDE (SO₂)¹

A compound composed of one sulfur and two oxygen molecules. Sulfur dioxide emitted into the atmosphere through natural and anthropogenic processes is changed in a complex series of chemical reactions in the atmosphere to sulfate aerosols. These aerosols are believed to result in negative radiative forcing (i.e., tending to cool the Earth's surface) and do result in acid deposition (e.g., acid rain). See *aerosols*, *radiative forcing*, *acid deposition*, *acid rain*.

SULFUR HEXAFLUORIDE (SF₆)¹

A colorless gas soluble in alcohol and ether, slightly soluble in water. A very powerful greenhouse gas used primarily in electrical transmission and distribution systems and as a dielectric in electronics. The global warming potential of SF₆ is 23,900. See *global warming potential*.

SURFACE MINING⁷

Removal of soil, sub-soil, and other strata and then extracting a mineral deposit found fairly close to the Earth's surface. See *strip mining*.

SYNTHETIC FERTILIZER⁷

Commercially prepared mixtures of plant nutrients such as nitrates, phosphates, and potassium applied to the soil to restore fertility and increase crop yields. See *organic fertilizer*.

SYNTHETIC NATURAL GAS (SNG)³

A manufactured product chemically similar in most respects to natural gas, resulting from the conversion or reforming of petroleum hydrocarbons. It may easily be substituted for, or interchanged with, pipeline quality natural gas.

TAILINGS⁷

Rock and other waste materials removed as impurities when minerals are mined and mineral deposits are processed. These materials are usually dumped on the ground or into ponds.

TAR SAND⁷

Swamp-like deposit of a mixture of fine clay, sand, water, and variable amounts of tar-like heavy oil known as bitumen. Bitumen can be extracted from tar sand by heating. It can then be purified and upgraded to synthetic crude oil. See *bitumen*.

TEMPERATURE⁷

Measure of the average speed of motion of the atoms or molecules in a substance or combination of substances at a given moment. See *heat*.

TERRESTRIAL⁷

Pertaining to land.

TERRESTRIAL RADIATION⁹

The total infrared radiation emitted by the Earth and its atmosphere in the temperature range of approximately 200 to 300 Kelvin. Terrestrial radiation provides a major part of the potential energy changes necessary to drive the atmospheric wind system and is responsible for maintaining the surface air temperature within limits of livability.

TRACE GAS¹

Any one of the less common gases found in the Earth's atmosphere. Nitrogen, oxygen, and argon make up more than 99 percent of the Earth's atmosphere. Other gases, such as carbon dioxide, water vapor, methane, oxides of nitrogen, ozone, and ammonia, are considered trace gases. Although relatively unimportant in terms of their absolute volume, they have significant effects on the Earth's weather and climate.

TRANSPORTATION SECTOR⁸

Consists of private and public passenger and freight transportation, as well as government transportation, including military operations.

TROPOSPHERE^{1&7}

The lowest layer of the atmosphere and contains about 95 percent of the mass of air in the Earth's atmosphere. The troposphere extends from the Earth's surface up to about 10 to 15 kilometers. All weather processes take place in the troposphere. Ozone that is formed in the troposphere plays a significant role in both the greenhouse gas effect and urban smog. See *ozone precursor, stratosphere, atmosphere*.

TROPOSPHERIC OZONE PRECURSOR

See *ozone precursor*.

TROPOSPHERIC OZONE¹

See *ozone*.

ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION (UV)¹¹

A portion of the electromagnetic spectrum with wavelengths shorter than visible light. The sun produces UV, which is commonly split into three bands of decreasing wavelength. Shorter wavelength radiation has a greater potential to cause biological damage on living organisms. The longer wavelength ultraviolet band, UVA, is not absorbed by ozone in the atmosphere. UVB is mostly absorbed by ozone, although some reaches the Earth. The shortest wavelength band, UVC, is completely absorbed by ozone and normal oxygen in the atmosphere.

UNFINISHED OILS³

All oils requiring further refinery processing, except those requiring only mechanical blending. Includes naphtha and lighter oils, kerosene and light gas oils, heavy gas oils, and residuum.

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)¹

The international treaty unveiled at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June, 1992. The UNFCCC commits signatory countries to stabilize anthropogenic (i.e., human-induced) greenhouse gas emissions to "levels that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system". The UNFCCC also requires that all signatory parties develop and update national inventories of anthropogenic emissions of all greenhouse gases not otherwise controlled by the Montreal Protocol. Out of 155 countries that have ratified this accord, the United States was the first industrialized nation to do so.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT)⁸

One vehicle traveling the distance of one mile. Thus, total vehicle miles is the total mileage traveled by all vehicles.

VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (VOCs)⁶

Organic compounds that evaporate readily into the atmosphere at normal temperatures. VOCs contribute significantly to photochemical smog production and certain health problems. See *non-methane volatile organic compounds*.

WASTEWATER²

Water that has been used and contains dissolved or suspended waste materials. See *sewage treatment*.

WATER VAPOR¹

The most abundant greenhouse gas; it is the water present in the atmosphere in gaseous form. Water vapor is an important part of the natural greenhouse effect. While humans are not significantly increasing its concentration, it contributes to the enhanced greenhouse effect because the warming influence of greenhouse gases leads to a positive water vapor feedback. In addition to its role as a natural greenhouse gas, water vapor plays an important role in regulating the temperature of the planet because clouds form when excess water vapor in the atmosphere condenses to form ice and water droplets and precipitation.

WAXES²

Solid or semisolid materials derived from petroleum distillates or residues. Light-colored, more or less translucent crystalline masses, slightly greasy to the touch, consisting of a mixture of solid hydrocarbons in which the paraffin series predominates. Included are all marketable waxes, whether crude scale or fully refined. Used primarily as industrial coating for surface protection.

WEATHER¹

Weather is the specific condition of the atmosphere at a particular place and time. It is measured in terms of such things as wind, temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, cloudiness, and precipitation. In most places, weather can change from hour-to-hour, day-to-day, and season-to-season. Climate is the average of weather over time and space. A simple way of remembering the difference is that climate is what you expect (e.g. cold winters) and 'weather' is what you get (e.g. a blizzard). See *climate*.

WETLAND⁷

Land that stays flooded with fresh or salt water all or part of the year.

WETLANDS²

Areas regularly saturated by surface or groundwater and subsequently characterized by a prevalence of vegetation adapted for life in saturated-soil conditions.

WOOD ENERGY²

Wood and wood products used as fuel, including roundwood (i.e., cordwood), limbwood, wood chips, bark, sawdust, forest residues, and charcoal.

Note: This glossary is composed of terms used in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 1999. Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-1997. (EPA-236-R-99-003. April 1999)

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