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Write the importance of alternative sources of energy

In the U.S., fossil fuels produce up to 80% of all energy that we consume. Our current level of dependence on fossil fuels puts us on track for a rapid depletion of these finite materials. Meaning, if we're not careful, we will run out of our precious, non-renewable resources. That means no more oil, natural gas, and even coal. Burning fossil fuels in power plants is hard also on the environment. We're talking about everything from ocean and air pollution to the destruction of entire ecosystems. The good news is, we're now able to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels like oil, coal, and natural gas, thanks to the growth of alternative energy sources. This article will discuss what alternative energy is and why it's so important that we transition from our dependence on fossil fuels to alternative energy sources. We'll also take a look at the difference between alternative and renewable energy sources, along with what sources of energy we're using today to meet our energy needs. **What Is Alternative Energy?** Fossil fuels (oil, coal, and natural gas) are our most traditional source for power generation. Therefore, the energy that's produced from any source other than fossil fuels is alternative energy. In other words, alternative energy is any amount of energy derived from non-fossil fuel sources. Generally speaking, using alternative energy has a low environmental impact. **What's the Difference Between Renewable and Alternative Energy Sources?** We now know that alternative energy sources are any source we use to supplement or even replace traditional energy sources used for power generation. You could almost say the same thing about renewable energy sources. But there is one subtle difference between the two. All renewable energy sources fall under the category of alternative energy sources, but it doesn't work the other way around. That's because renewable energy sources are derived from naturally replenished sources or processes of Earth, such as the sun, wind, and water. We refer to these resources as renewable or sustainable (as in sustainable energy) since, unlike fossil fuels, this naturally occurring continual renewal makes them inexhaustible. However, it's possible for there to be alternative energy sources that are exhaustible, and therefore not renewable. That's the difference. So what alternative energy source is exhaustible? You'll have to continue reading to find out. **What Are the Best Types of Alternative Energy Sources?** The equipment necessary to harness energy from alternative sources used to be so expensive that it wasn't practical for consumer use. However, thanks to increased demand, more experienced energy developers, competitive supply chains, improved renewable technologies, and enhanced energy efficiency capabilities, that's no longer the case. In fact, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) released a report back in 2020 showing how renewable power has now become increasingly cheaper than fossil fuels for electricity generation. Let's look at a few of the best alternative energy sources we use today. **What Are the Most Affordable Energy Production Options?** source Onshore wind power and solar photovoltaics, respectively, are currently the most affordable options when it comes to energy production. Using these two natural resources over coal could save as much as \$23 billion in yearly power system expenses. It could also lower annual carbon dioxide emissions by 1.8 gigatons. Bioenergy, geothermal energy, hydroelectric power, and nuclear energy are also making their way into the financially competitive spotlight, depending significantly on location. **What Is the Most Efficient Alternative Energy Source?** source When it comes to energy efficiency, the leader of the renewable energy pack is wind energy. Behind wind comes geothermal energy, hydropower, nuclear energy, and then solar power. **What Are the Most Reliable Sources of Energy?** source Out of all the known energy sources, nuclear energy has the highest capacity factor by far. Nuclear power plants are able to produce maximum power over 93% of the time on an annual basis. Next in line comes geothermal, followed by natural gas. Natural gas is considered the cleanest burning and most reliable fossil fuel, but it still isn't a clean energy resource. However, there is an alternative called renewable natural gas (RNG). RNG also goes by the name of biomethane and is produced from livestock, landfill waste, and other organic materials through anaerobic digestion. While it's not a fossil fuel, RNG is completely identical to conventional natural gas in chemical make-up, allowing them to use the same distribution system. **Which Alternative Energy Source Is Least Damaging to the Environment?** source As it turns out, wind energy, which uses turbines to harness its power from the wind, is one of the cleanest and most sustainable forms of electricity generation. It's able to produce energy without generating any pollutants or global warming emissions. Plus, the land and animal impact of wind turbines is minimal. **What Are the 9 Most Commonly Used Alternative Energy Sources?** Here's a quick-reference list of some of the most common sustainable energy resources that we use today. 1. Wind Energy Wind power has tripled over the past 10 years in the United States, making wind energy the number one largest renewable energy source in the nation. Wind power is one of the alternative energy sources that serves both individuals and entire communities. It's versatile, and can be produced from small-scale windmills or wind turbines on residential properties to large-scale offshore wind farms in the ocean. 2. Solar Energy Solar power most commonly refers to the use of photovoltaic cells (or solar cells) to create energy. On a small scale, you may see a few solar panels on a house roof used to produce energy for just that one home. On a larger scale, you may see a solar farm used as a power plant to produce electricity for their consumers. 3. Hydroelectric Energy Generated from the energy of moving water, hydroelectricity (also known as hydropower) is produced when water behind a dam causes turbine blades to move as it flows through an intake. The turbine blades then rotate a generator to produce electricity that is sent to power homes and businesses. 4. Geothermal Energy We generate geothermal power by tapping into underground reservoirs of hot water and steam. Geothermal electricity can directly heat and cool buildings. 5. Bioenergy We generate bioenergy from organic materials known as biomass or biofuels. Some examples would be recently living animal or plant byproducts and wood. For example, methane can be captured from landfills to produce bioenergy, which we then used to produce electricity and heat. Ethanol is one example of a biofuel that many people are familiar with. 6. Nuclear Energy Nuclear energy is created in the form of heat through the fission process of atoms. The initial fission process creates energy and triggers a chain reaction that repeats the process and generates more energy. In nuclear power plants, the heat that fission produces creates steam. The steam then rotates a turbine, which leads to the production of electricity. 7. Hydrogen Energy Hydrogen is used as a clean-burning fuel, leading to fewer pollutants and a cleaner environment. We also use it for fuel cells. These are similar to batteries and are used to supply power to electric motors. 8. Tidal Energy With the movement of the tides, we get tidal energy when the kinetic energy of the water movement converts into electrical energy. Of course, this is one of the location-specific sources of energy, but it's very effective. Tidal energy is renewable and produces large amounts of energy even with low-speed tides. 9. Wave Energy Wave energy is an alternative energy source derived from waves as they move across the water. Wave energy uses electricity generators placed on the ocean's surface. Wave height, wavelength, wave speed, and water density determine the energy output. Wave energy is environmentally friendly, renewable, and harmless to the atmosphere. **Which Alternative Energy Sources Are Non-Renewable?** source While nuclear energy itself happens to be a renewable energy source, we do not classify it in the renewable category. The material used in nuclear power plants to create nuclear fission is typically a rare type of uranium, which is non-renewable. Another alternative energy source that is sometimes considered a non-renewable source is biomass energy which relies on biomass feedstocks (plants that are processed and burned for electricity generation). Biomass feedstocks include crops like corn and soy. If you don't replant quickly enough, biomass energy turns into a non-renewable energy source. **What Are the Benefits of Using Alternative Energy Sources?** Other names for renewable energy that you may hear are clean energy or green energy. When we use renewable resources to produce energy, it's much gentler on the environment than burning fossil fuels. Governments and individual consumers alike have the ability to make a substantial reduction in their carbon footprint, directly impacting global warming and climate change, by seeking alternative energy sources. Let's take a look at the environmental benefits of clean energy, along with the economic benefits it can offer. **Conserve fossil fuels:** We generate renewable energy by tapping into virtually inexhaustible resources. When we use these natural resources, we're allowed to conserve and extend our time with non-renewable fossil fuels, which are dangerously close to depletion. **Slow and reverse climate change:** The top cause contributing to carbon dioxide emissions in the United States is electricity generation from fossil fuel power plants. Carbon dioxide and additional greenhouse gas emissions are leading contributors to climate change and global warming. Alternative energy sources have a much lower carbon footprint than natural gas, coal, and other fossil fuels. Switching to renewable energy sources to produce electricity will help the planet by slowing and reversing climate change. **Save lives:** Making the switch to just hydropower, wind energy, and solar energy can potentially save up to 7 million lives each year by reducing air pollutants. **Reduce severe weather:** By slowing the effects of climate change and eventually reversing them, we can expect to see a reduction in extreme weather like droughts, floods, and storms caused by global warming. **Minimize fuel dependency:** We can diversify our energy supply by implementing the widespread use of large-scale renewable energy technologies and minimizing our imported fuel dependency. **Economic and job development:** Producing even more utility-scale energy systems can create economic growth as well as jobs in the installation and manufacturing industries, not to mention the sustainable energy industry. **Can Alternative Energy Effectively Replace Fossil Fuels?** source As alternative energy technologies continue to improve, the cost simultaneously falls. Solar and wind power have unlocked the potential to generate an energy reserve plentiful enough to meet the world's demand. When you look at how affordable, effective, and economically friendly these powerhouses are, you begin to see how we could displace fossil fuels within the next 30 years. Most consumers agree that the benefits of using alternative energy sources far outweigh any drawbacks. Not to mention, improved technology is continually emerging to address and eliminate the disadvantages of various renewable resources. You now understand the importance of making the switch to alternative energy sources and why it's so vital to a healthy future, but how can you go about making this necessary change? When you're ready, contact your energy supplier. Let them know that you'd like to choose a new electricity plan or natural gas plan as part of your energy conservation efforts. Inquire about green energy products and plan options to get started on your new sustainable lifestyle. 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