



# What is Natural Gas?

**Natural gas** is like air. You can't see it, or smell it, or taste it. But it has a lot of energy in it. You can burn it to make heat. The early Chinese burned natural gas to get salt from sea water.

## NATURAL GAS IS A FOSSIL FUEL

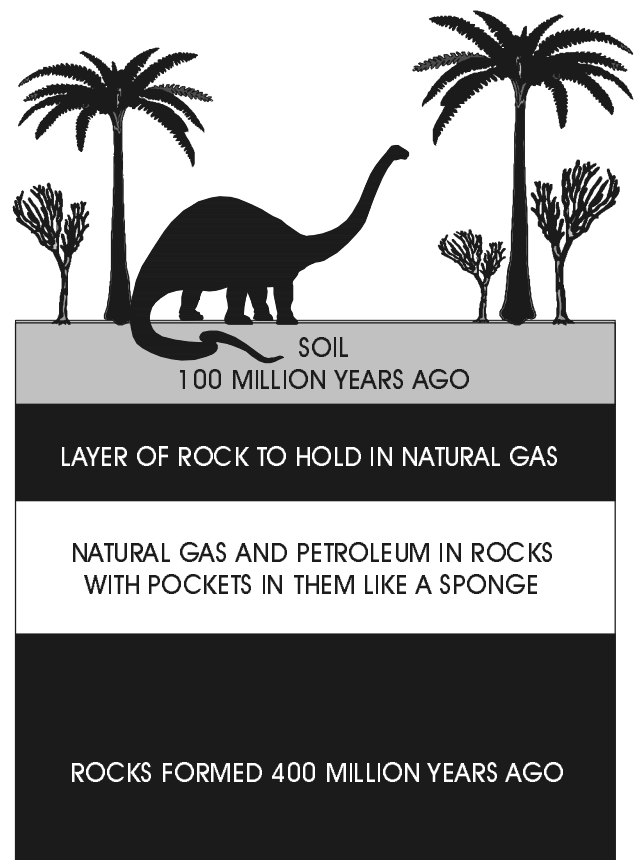
Natural gas was formed millions of years ago, before the dinosaurs. Oceans covered much of the earth, filled with tiny sea plants and animals.

When the plants and animals died, they sank to the bottom and were covered by sand. Layers of dead plants, animals, and sand built up over time.

Heat and pressure turned the plants and animals into natural gas and petroleum.

Since natural gas is made from plants and animals, it is called a **fossil fuel**.

The plants and animals got their energy from the sun. It was stored in them when they died. This is the energy in natural gas.



## NATURAL GAS IS NONRENEWABLE

The natural gas we use today took millions of years to form. That's why we call it a **nonrenewable** energy source. We can't make more in a short time. Someday, most of the natural gas we can reach by drilling underground will be gone.

Garbage sometimes produces natural gas as it rots. This kind of natural gas is called **methane**. Methane is a **renewable** energy source. There will always be garbage.



## WE DRILL FOR NATURAL GAS

Natural gas is found underground in pockets of rock. We drill wells into the ground and pump out the gas. Some wells are a mile deep!



The natural gas is shipped from the wells to plants that clean it. A smell like rotten eggs is added so that we can detect any leaks.

**Natural gas pipelines, if connected end to end, would stretch to the moon and back twice.**

## NATURAL GAS IS MOVED IN PIPELINES

We move natural gas from one place to another in underground **pipelines**. There are more than a million miles of pipelines in the United States.



## WE USE NATURAL GAS EVERY DAY

Almost everyone uses natural gas. Most homes use natural gas for heat. So do schools and hospitals. Many stoves and water heaters use natural gas, too.

Factories burn natural gas to make products like paper and cement. Natural gas is also an ingredient in paint, glue, fertilizer, and many other products.

Power plants burn natural gas to make electricity. Most new power plants burn natural gas. Sometimes, natural gas is even used to run cars, trucks, and buses. Most mail trucks use natural gas instead of gasoline.

## NATURAL GAS IS CLEAN TO BURN

Natural gas is the cleanest burning fossil fuel. It doesn't pollute the air as much as coal or oil. That's why it is a good fuel for heating our homes.