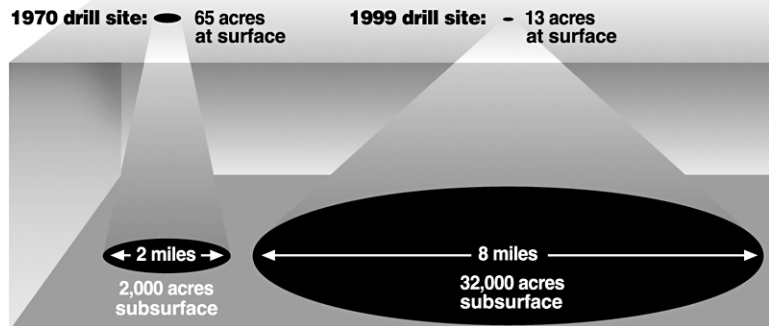


TECHNOLOGY IN OUR LIVES

Oil Companies: More Environmentally Friendly

Reducing Environmental Impact

Oil companies are using advanced drilling technologies to access larger areas below ground while reducing the size of the “footprint” they make on the surface. The illustration compares drilling operations on Alaska’s North Slope today to 30 years ago.



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Juan Thomassie

(NAPSA)—American consumers and businesses are increasingly working to ensure that our children and grandchildren will have a healthy place to grow up and raise their children and grandchildren.

Energy companies share this environmental concern and have developed technologies that help produce more petroleum products than ever before, while minimizing the effect on the environment. What’s more, refining technologies help companies produce cleaner-burning fuels at less cost.

Oil companies have greatly increased drilling efficiency by using sound waves to explore potential oil deposits. This seismic technology operates by generating a sound wave and reading the reflected vibrations from underground rock formations. The development of three-dimensional imaging has given explorers an even better idea of how much oil can be found in a given deposit. Recently, researchers added a fourth dimension—time—to better identify deposits.

These advanced technologies ensure that companies have an accurate prediction of where an oil deposit exists, how large it is and what shape it takes, before drilling ever begins. As technology im-

proves the efficiency of exploration, it is reducing the “footprint” that oil companies leave on the environment.

However, reducing the impact that the oil industry has on the earth’s surface does not alleviate all the concerns about petroleum products’ effect on the planet’s atmosphere. Research has shown that the waste products produced when fossil fuels are burned are contributing to some of the earth’s most vexing environmental challenges. In particular, one naturally occurring element in transportation fuels—sulfur—causes undesirable byproducts when fuels are burned. In response to these concerns, refiners have developed processes that will remove sulfur from gasoline.

Although research on renewable fuel options is progressing, fossil fuels remain our most efficient energy producers. Until energy producers can reduce our reliance on petroleum products, they will keep developing products and processes that lessen the industry’s impact on the planet.

To learn more about energy issues, visit www.oil360.org, a comprehensive site hosted by Sarkeys Energy Center, the University of Oklahoma.

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Note to Editors: This is the ninth in a series of 12 articles on America’s energy resources.