

The Future is Here

Renewable energy. Alternative energy. These are terms we have heard for quite some time, but ideas that always seem to remain in the distant future. But how has energy use, particularly renewable energy, progressed over time? Almost irrefutably, the earliest use of renewable energy dates back to prehistoric times, when primitive humans harnessed fire for the first time. Early records date Egyptians channelling wind energy for travel along the Nile as early as 5000 BC. Since then, humans have been progressing in the field of renewable energy. In 1839, Alexandre Edmond Becquerel's discovery of the photoelectric effect drastically impacted the scope of harnessed renewable energy. He explained how electricity could be obtained from sunlight. However, photoelectric power remained largely unused until Russel Ohl's invention of the solar cell in 1941. Soon solar cells and panels were being developed to reuse solar energy across the globe. In 1904, geothermal energy as another renewable energy resource was being explored. In Tuscany Italy, natural steam erupting from the earth was used to turn the generator turbines. Thus, the first dry steam geothermal power plant was born. As our understanding of complex environmental systems increases, many alternative energy solutions are being developed and implemented. Today, companies such as Nu Energy work to provide renewable energy to Australian homes through the use of solar photovoltaic (PV) and solar hot water systems. The development and accessibility of renewable energy has markedly improved, providing even families with the ability to choose how their energy is obtained and reused. Developments in renewable energy have even progressed via legislation such as the 2001 Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) established to "encourage additional investment in renewable energy generation." Even the automotive industry has furthered the use of renewable energy to reach previously unheard of goals. In 2007, the Ford Fusion Hydrogen 999 set a land speed record of 207.297 mph. Ford became the first automaker to establish a record for "production-based fuel cell powered car." The Ford Fusion Hydrogen 999 is said to show "one of the ways Ford is advancing environmental innovation" as it is powered by hydrogen fuel cells in conjunction with an electric motor. From large motor industries to small home installations, the use of renewable energy has greatly developed. There is no doubt that renewable energy is quickly progressing in modern society. With availability and progressing knowledge concerning Earth's natural resources, renewable energy is no longer a thing of the future.

References

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Jessica Bailey, Hunter Women's Health, Sydney, NSW, Australia