

Plastic

Plastic products are something we as people can't really escape. We use it so often that we don't really think about where it comes from and how it really affects us. Plastic starts out as a few different natural resources: crude oil, natural gas, coals, and some other things, then it's refined into different polymers. We use these polymers for other things in daily life, like gasoline for our cars and the pavement we drive those cars on. But a certain polymer called naphtha gets poured into molds and shaped into all of the plastic products we use today. Most of our plastic comes from China, they are the world's biggest plastic producers, exporters, and *wasters*. But the waste comes in a bit later, let's focus on what happens when plastic is made.

Like any other factory product, releasing these chemicals into the air is extremely harmful for the environment. And it's not safe for the workers who manage these factories either, being exposed to these gases and chemicals is harmful for them as well. Plastic production may also cause explosions, and 16% of industrial accidents have been caused by plastic production alone. And when we go really far back to how plastic begins, with crude oil, the drilling of that oil harms our environment, our wildlife, and is contributing to climate change. But after the production of plastic products end up in our hands and into the trash, what happens to it then? China used to be a huge part of the plastic waste trade. They had little regulations regarding plastic waste dumping, so they would take a lot of countries' waste and dump it in landfills or the ocean. However, China recently implemented a plastic waste ban, which means our plastic waste is being built up to an overwhelming degree.

Plastic waste takes a harsh toll on the environment. Waste that is discarded in the ocean harms our ocean life and destroys beautiful environments like coral reefs with the toxic chemicals. And we all know that plastic is not biodegradable, leaving it to sit in landfills for years and years, doing nothing but poisoning the earth and the water that travels through it. A change has to be made to protect our environment, and we can be the start. While it's hard to reduce our use of plastic, considering how much of what we consume is quite literally wrapped in it, small changes can be made. Like the use of metal straws, reusable cups, reusing plastic packaging and recycling. Educate others on how plastic affects our environment, and take steps to be part of the fight against plastic.