

Methane Encyclopedia Article

Methane

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Methane

An organic compound with the chemical formula CH_4 , methane occurs naturally in air at a concentration of about 0.0002 percent. It is produced in processes such as the **anaerobic** decay of organic matter, the growth of certain types of plants, and the belching of cattle. Methane is the major component of **natural gas**, making up about 85 percent of that fuel. Environmental scientists are increasingly concerned about methane as a possible greenhouse gas. Like **carbon dioxide**, methane traps heat reflected from the earth and, therefore, may contribute to global warming. Increases in agricultural and dairying activities have resulted in an increase in methane production, possibly contributing to **climate** change.

See Also

Greenhouse Effect; Greenhouse Gases