

Energy Research and Development Administration Encyclopedia Article

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Energy Research and Development Administration

This agency was created in 1974 from the non-regulatory parts of the **Atomic Energy Commission** (AEC), and it existed until 1977, when it was incorporated into the **U.S. Department of Energy**. In its short life span, the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) started to diversify U.S. energy research outside of **nuclear power**. Large-scale demonstration projects were begun in numerous areas. These included projects to convert **coal** and solid wastes into liquid and gaseous fuels; experiments on methods to extract and process **oil shale** and **tar sands**, as well as an effort to develop a viable breeder reactor that would ensure a virtually inexhaustible source of **uranium** for electricity. The agency also supported research on **solar energy** for space heating, industrial process heat, and electricity. In the short time available, basic problems could not be solved, and the achievements of many of the demonstration projects were disappointing. Nevertheless, many important advances were made in commercializing cost-effective technologies for **energy conservation**, such as energy-efficient lighting systems, improved heat pumps, and better heating systems. The agency also conducted successful research in Environmental, safety, and health areas.