Life Cycle Assessment Encyclopedia Article

Life Cycle Assessment

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Life Cycle Assessment

Life cycle assessment (or LCA) refers to a process in industrial **ecology** by which the products, processes, and facilities used to manufacture specific products are each examined for their environmental impacts. A balance sheet is prepared for each product that considers: the use of materials; the consumption of energy; the **recycling**, re-use, and/or disposal of non-used materials and energy (in a less-enlightened context, these are referred to as "wastes"); and the recycling or re-use of products after their commercial life has passed. By taking a comprehensive, integrated look at all of these aspects of the manufacturing and use of products, life cycle assessment finds ways to increase efficiency, to re-use, reduce, and recycle materials, and to lessen the overall environmental impacts of the process.