Volatile Organic Compound Encyclopedia Article

Volatile Organic Compound

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Volatile Organic Compound

In **environmental science**, the term usually refers to the **hydrocarbons**, especially those found in **air pollution**. In 1988, the five most abundant of these hydrocarbons in urban air were isopentane, n-butane, **toluene**, propane, and ethane; each of these compounds has unburned **gasoline** as its primary source. In the presence of sunlight, hydrocarbons react with **ozone**, **nitrogen oxides**, and other components of polluted air to form compounds that are hazardous to plants, animals, and humans. In 1995, volatile organic compounds ranked third behind **carbon monoxide** and **particulate** matter (which includes dust, **smoke**, soot, and chemical liquid droplets from various sources) and just above sulfur and **nitrogen** oxides in annual pollutant emissions in the United States.

See Also

Air Pollution Control; Air Quality