

How rising gas prices emphasize the need for renewable energy

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The war in Ukraine has caused oil prices to surge to the highest level

since 2008, with gas prices in some areas of California creeping up to \$6 per gallon. Rising prices have led renewable energy advocates like Tesla CEO Elon Musk and United States Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm to call on companies to increase production and raise output.

Jeffrey Logan, the associate director of policy and analysis at CU Boulder's Renewable and Sustainable Energy Institute, has nearly 30 years of experience in [energy](#) policy analysis, low-carbon market development, [energy security](#) and strategic planning.

Logan spoke about what the current oil and gas crisis means for the future of [renewable energy](#).

What emphasis does the current oil and gas crisis place on the need for greater access to renewable energy in the U.S. and beyond?

The current situation—like every [energy crisis](#) we face—tells us that we should have taken stronger action much earlier to lower our reliance on [fossil fuels](#). If we had taken bolder action starting 12 years ago, when the costs of wind and solar fell on par with fossil alternatives, we could have largely insulated ourselves from today's rising prices and climate-driven disasters.

How could the U.S reduce its vulnerability to wild swings in the oil and gas markets by shifting to cleaner sources of energy?

There really are few options to rapidly shift away from oil and gas in the timeframe needed. U.S. oil and gas production can't be ramped up much in the short term, and some U.S. producers have also said they won't

emphasize output growth at the expense of profitability.

The shift to clean energy can be accelerated but it will still take years to make a significant dent in the reliance on fossil fuels. Many observers note the lack of stronger federal policies in the U.S. to promote the more rapid deployment of renewables. The challenge of building new transmission lines—which aids in the integration of variable wind and solar on the grid—is another barrier.

Most of the clean energy substitutes will take time to roll out, but investment in energy efficiency, electric vehicles, solar and wind energy, longer-duration energy storage and replacing natural gas boilers/furnaces with [heat pumps](#) can make cost-effective contributions if pursued vigorously. Solutions are out there.

What damage could more long-term reliance on fossil fuels do to our earth?

We've all been seeing the increasing risks associated with the climate crisis in terms of floods, droughts and wildfires. Unfortunately, the current war in Ukraine is likely going to result in increased emissions over the near term as countries slow plans to retire [coal plants](#) or rely more on carbon-intensive liquified natural gas. This is probably the least bad solution for many countries that are heavily reliant on fossil fuels to heat their homes, cook their food and power their vehicles.

Over the longer term, however, the current energy crisis is likely to accelerate the transition to cleaner, non-fossil sources as countries look to insulate themselves from price spikes while focusing on sustainability.

Provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

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