

Renewable energy storage system

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Energy storage is a technology that holds energy at one time so it can be used at another time. Building more energy storage allows renewable energy sources like wind and solar to power more of our electric grid. As the cost of solar and wind power has in many places dropped below fossil fuels, the need for cheap and abundant energy storage has become a key challenge for building an energy system that does not emit greenhouse gases or contribute to climate change.

Energy storage will be even more important if we change our transportation system to run mainly on electricity, increasing the need for on-demand electric power. Because transportation and electricity together produce almost half of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, cheap energy storage has a huge role to play in fighting climate change.

Solar and wind provide "intermittent" electricity, meaning their energy production changes depending on the weather. People often need energy when the wind is not blowing or the sun isn"t shining, so we can end up with too much electricity at some times, and not enough electricity at other times. This is commonly referred to as the "grid level energy storage problem." If we could store the extra energy when we have it, save it for later, then use it when we need it, we could get all or nearly all our electricity from wind and solar.

However, storing energy is expensive. In fact, when you add the cost of an energy storage system to the cost of solar panels or wind turbines, solar and wind are no longer competitive with coal or natural gas. As a result, the world is racing to make energy storage cheaper, which would allow us to replace fossil fuels with wind and solar on a large scale.

Each form of energy storage has its own challenges and advantages. In comparing the costs of energy storage systems, experts consider the cost of the system, its lifetime before it needs to be replaced, and the amount of energy lost between charging and discharging the system. Time will tell which technologies emerge as widely adopted solutions.



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