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Microwave Tires and Voilà! Alternative Fuel

Inventors Aims to Kill Two Birds with One Zap

Waste tires pile up and can catch fire? Zap it.


The world is running out of oil? Zap it.

Frank Pringle wants to use microwave in a vacuum to make alternative fuel from waste tires. How much? With 50 cents' worth of electricity, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, he can make a 14-inch car tire into 1.2 gallons of diesel, 7.5 pounds of carbon black, 50 cubic feet of combustible gas and two pounds of — get this — high-strength steel. (If you're keeping score, 50-cent diesel is about one seventh the price at the pump these days.)

He's an underground inventor who has only just begun getting attention from the Department of Energy and university scientists. His trick is to dial up, or down, the frequency of microwave energy (there are 10 million different frequencies) to achieve different results (like grabbing crude from oil sands or oil shale, or making grass clippings into ethanol).

There are innumerable hurdles Pringle still must jump to scale up his invention (not least, testing the pollution potential of those new fuels and the conversion process) but it's this type of ingenuity that might solve multiple thorny problems and lead us toward a more sustainable future.

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