

# EDWIN, WHY ARE YOU SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE DANGER OF A PROTRACTED OIL DISRUPTION?

It's a strong possibility that must be considered and addressed ahead of time. Our country would be immobilized by a simultaneous terrorist attack on the Abqaiq oil processing plant in Saudi Arabia, the nearby Ras Tanura oil shipping terminal, and the Strait of Hormuz—what I call the Apocalyptic Triangle. About 40% of all seaborne oil in the world (18% of the global supply) passes through this strait, including most shipments from Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Iraq. Even if the alternative East-West Petroline exiting at Yanbu on the Red Sea were utilized, the capacity there is only 5 million barrels per day. The United States as well as other nations would have to make do with a crippling shortfall of crude oil—10 percent or worse.

## How bad would 10% reduction in crude be?

The United States uses between 21 and 22 million barrels of crude daily. A shortfall of just 5 percent—a little more than 1 million barrels—would be sufficient to trigger the opening of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), which holds a 58-day supply of unrefined oil (about 700 million barrels). That is exactly what happened after Hurricane Katrina, when several key refineries and pipelines were temporarily disabled. A 7 percent shortfall would be so severe, it would require the assistance of our allies in opening their SPRs. A 10 percent reduction might be unmanageable and bring our economy to a standstill, according to government oil crisis personnel. Any further reduction would likely lead to a “Mad Max” scenario pitting neighbor against neighbor, neighborhood against neighborhood, and nation against nation—the nightmare moment we have all been dreading.

## What's America's plan to deal with such a catastrophe?

There is no plan. Of the 28 member states belonging to the International

Energy Agency, which was created after the 1973 Arab Oil Embargo to pool mutual assistance in the event of oil disruption, only the U.S. does not have a contingency plan designed to dramatically and quickly reduce oil consumption. Everyone is prepared except for us.

## Couldn't the United States just buy oil in the spot market and/or induce our oil companies to drill for maximum supply at full speed ahead?

Given the world's consumption at 85–86 million barrels and America's consumption of about 25 percent of that, unfortunately there would be no extra supply available to purchase. The world's excess supply consists of fewer than one million barrels, just enough to cover the occasional oil spill, pipeline damage, or sabotage on a small scale. As for new drilling, even under the best of circumstances, it could not yield its first barrel for 3–5 years. The U.S. cannot possibly wait that long.

## SAVE OUR WORLD — A REFORM IMPERATIVE

- Visit the Religious Action Center's Climate Change Resource Page (<http://rac.org/advocacy/issues/issueecc/challenge/>)
- Join the RAC in the “Virtual March to Stop Global Warming” ([www.stopglobalwarming.org](http://www.stopglobalwarming.org))
- Contact the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (<http://www.coejl.org/index.php>)
- For more info phone the RAC at 202-387-2800

Edwin Black is the author of *IBM and the Holocaust*, *Internal Combustion*, and, most recently, *The Plan: How to Rescue Society When the Oil Stops—or the Day Before*.

## What plan do you propose?

My plan for America is based upon the international oil crisis management protocols that other countries have on their books right now, our nation's wartime record in handling disasters and emergency supply disruptions, plus common sense. I call for an immediate reduction in oil consumption through a combination of severe restrictions, a surge in alternative fuels, and a mass retrofit of all vehicles and heating systems on a “war footing.” Trust me, this will not be a comfortable cold turkey, and it will not be fast—but the alternative is chaos.

## What kind of restrictions?

Transportation accounts for more than 63 percent of our oil consumption and most of that is to fuel passenger cars. We need to get gas guzzlers off the road: non-commercial passenger vehicles that get fewer than 15 miles per gallon would be grounded until retrofitted with a flex-fuel or alternative propulsion system. Cars with an EPA rating of 16–25 MPG would be allowed to drive once per week until retrofitted; cars with 26–35 MPG would be permitted to drive every other day; and hybrid vehicles rated at more than 36 MPG, such as the Prius, would be unrestricted, but nonetheless required to be retrofitted within six months.

## When you say “alt-fuel” and “flex-fuel,” what do you mean?

Alternative fuels include compressed natural gas (CNG), ammonia, hydrogen, sugar ethanol, and methanol. The term flex-fuel or “Open Fuel Standard” means adjusting the car's fuel system to accept a variety of fuels and fuel blends; a fuel sensing unit calculates how much of which type of fuel to use. There are also alternate propulsion systems such as electric. All of these are preferable to oil.