

The many problems with clean coal

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Most of us have heard of the clean coal terminology, especially during the presidential debates between Obama and McCain, but is there even such a thing as clean coal? Well, the answer is no. One of the major issues with clean coal is the actual acquisition. Most coal is acquired by the process of mountaintop removal. This process involves the removal of up to 1,000 vertical feet of overburden (chunks of the topography of the mountain) to expose underlying coal seams. Much of this overburden is moved into valleys in order to create valley fills. Naturally, this causes a huge disturbance in the balance of the ecosystem and environment. In the Appalachias nearly 1 million acres of forests have been destroyed due to mountaintop removal. The process itself also creates a liquid waste called slurry that is deposited in open lagoons. Naturally, when it floods, this waste (which contains heavy metals as well as carcinogenic compounds) flows into groundwater, affecting the water that people drink normally. Mountaintop removal not only increases the amount of debris in the air, it also threatens the lives of many people. Some people who have lived near the Appalachias have had their lives threatened by the mining companies to move out. One man, who lived on a piece of land worth nearly \$450 million had his life threatened and even had some people from the mining company kill his dogs. Others have had similar stories. (source: [Orion Magazine](#))

Not only is coal acquisition dirty, creating clean coal plants themselves may not be feasible. While there is technology that can capture the carbon emissions from coal, the problem is storing these gases safely (namely underground). Unfortunately there is no way to ensure that these gases do not leak out. Even the smallest amount of leaking could mitigate climate change. Greenpeace, one of the leading environmental organizations, gave the following reasons for not supporting clean coal in their report [False Hope: Why Carbon Capture and Storage Won't Save the Climate](#):