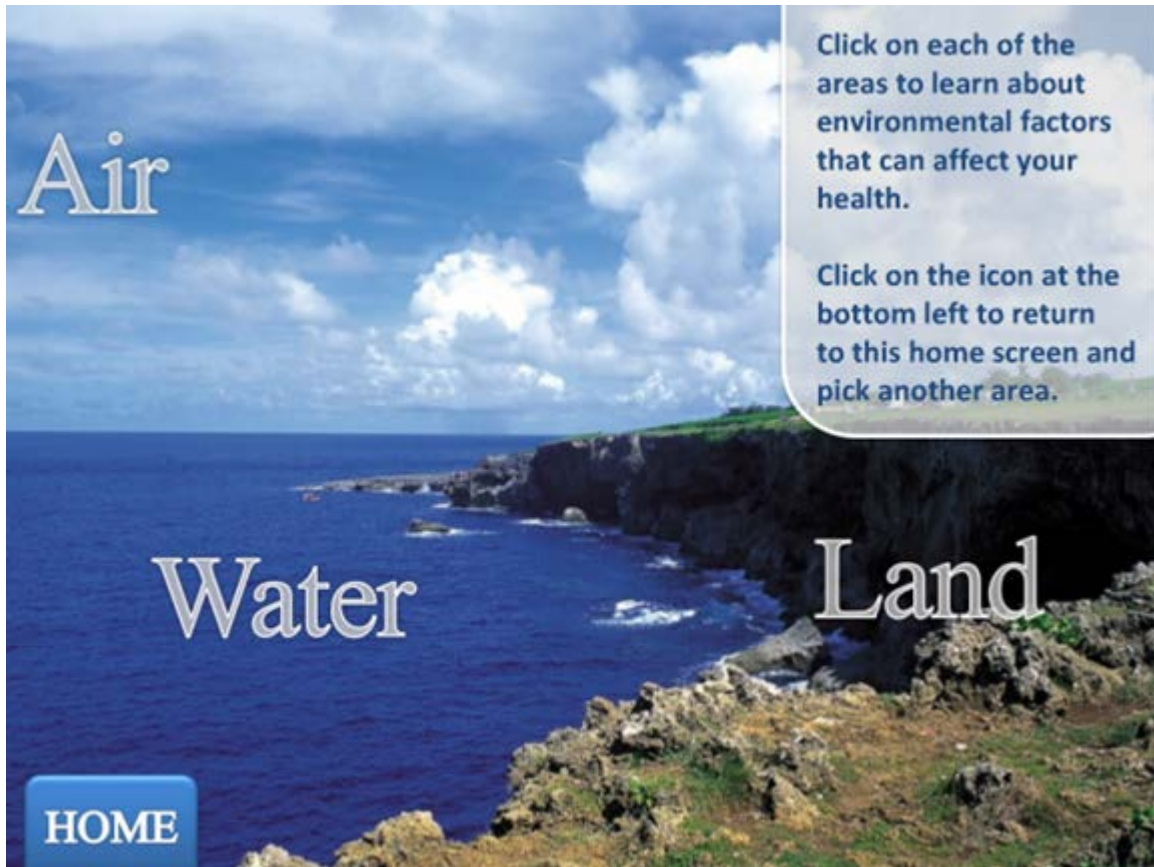


## Module 8: A Drive Through the Community

### Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment

#### Introduction



Click on each of the areas to learn about environmental factors that can affect your health. Click on the icon at the bottom left to return to this home screen and pick another area.

## Module 8: A Drive Through the Community Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment

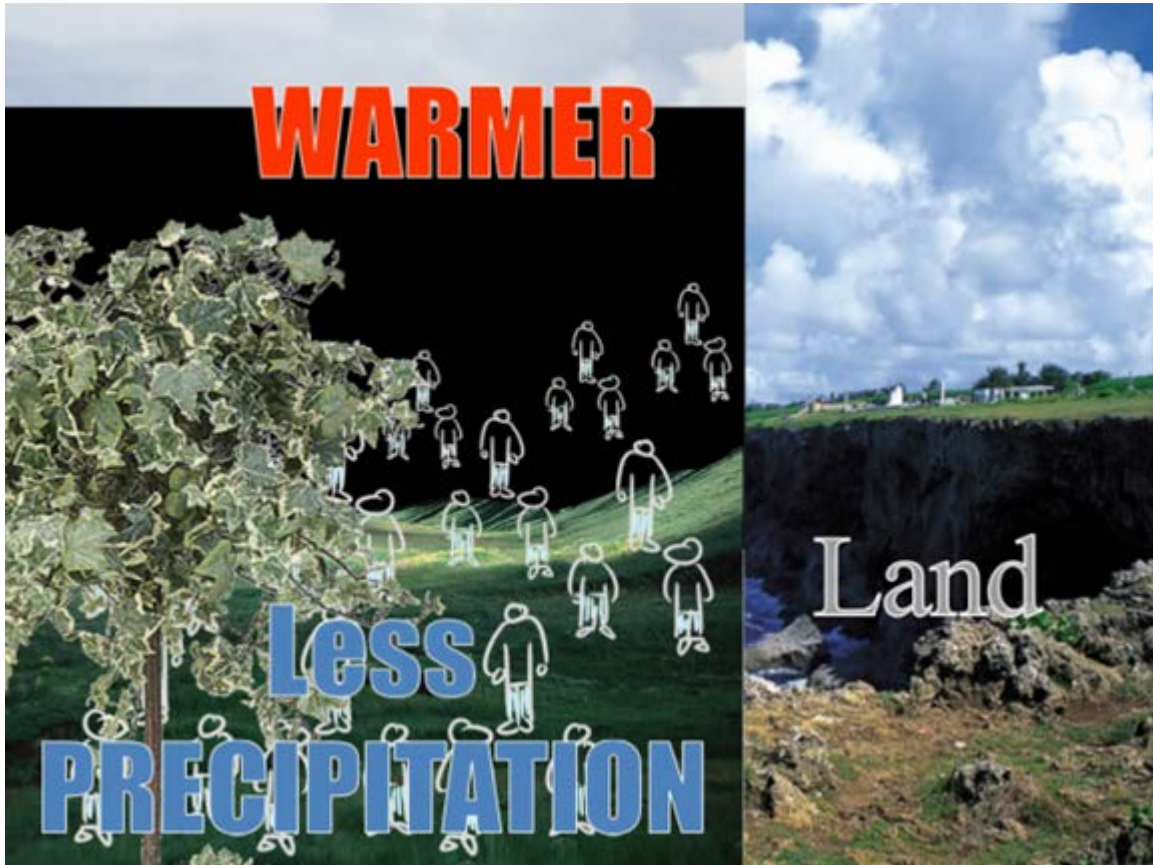
### Land: Pollution



As a society of consumers and mass production, questions arise regarding what we should do with the waste we accumulate. Unfortunately, much of this waste is dumped into massive landfills throughout the country, creating not only an eyesore but also more critically, grave problems for the environment. Some of the waste products that are deposited into these landfills are what the Environmental Protection Agency refers to as hazardous wastes, or rather, materials that are dangerous to our well-being, wearing to the environment, volatile, or combustible. One of the most harmful kinds of hazardous wastes is nuclear waste. Nuclear waste is radioactive hazardous waste. The radiation produced can have life-threatening implications for populations. After such hazardous wastes are deposited into landfills, they often release toxic gases that move into both our land and our water supplies.

## Module 8: A Drive Through the Community Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment

### Land: Deforestation



As the population of the United States and all over the world grows, communities everywhere face quite a predicament. Housing and food must be produced to accommodate these rising populations, and, unfortunately, this new housing is often built at the expense of wild forests and rain forests. As our forests and rainforests steadily decrease, tremendous changes take place. Many species of animals are left without homes, and the presence of trees and certain kinds of plants becomes virtually absent. In addition to upsetting the ecosystem for these plant and animal species, cutting down forests and rainforest affects the climate of regions. Trees play a large role in controlling the climate of a region. Without trees, areas grow steadily warmer and precipitation occurs less frequently.

## Module 8: A Drive Through the Community

### Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment

#### Land: Over-Harvesting



Desert regions are steadily growing and now cover nearly thirty percent of the earth's surface. The growth of desert areas has occurred as a result of over-harvesting the land. As the population grows, the need for food also grows. In an effort to meet the needs of a growing population, the land has been abused, and its efficiency has greatly declined. This abuse has made the land essentially unusable, and it is no longer fit to plant and maintain crops.

**Module 8: A Drive Through the Community**  
**Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment**

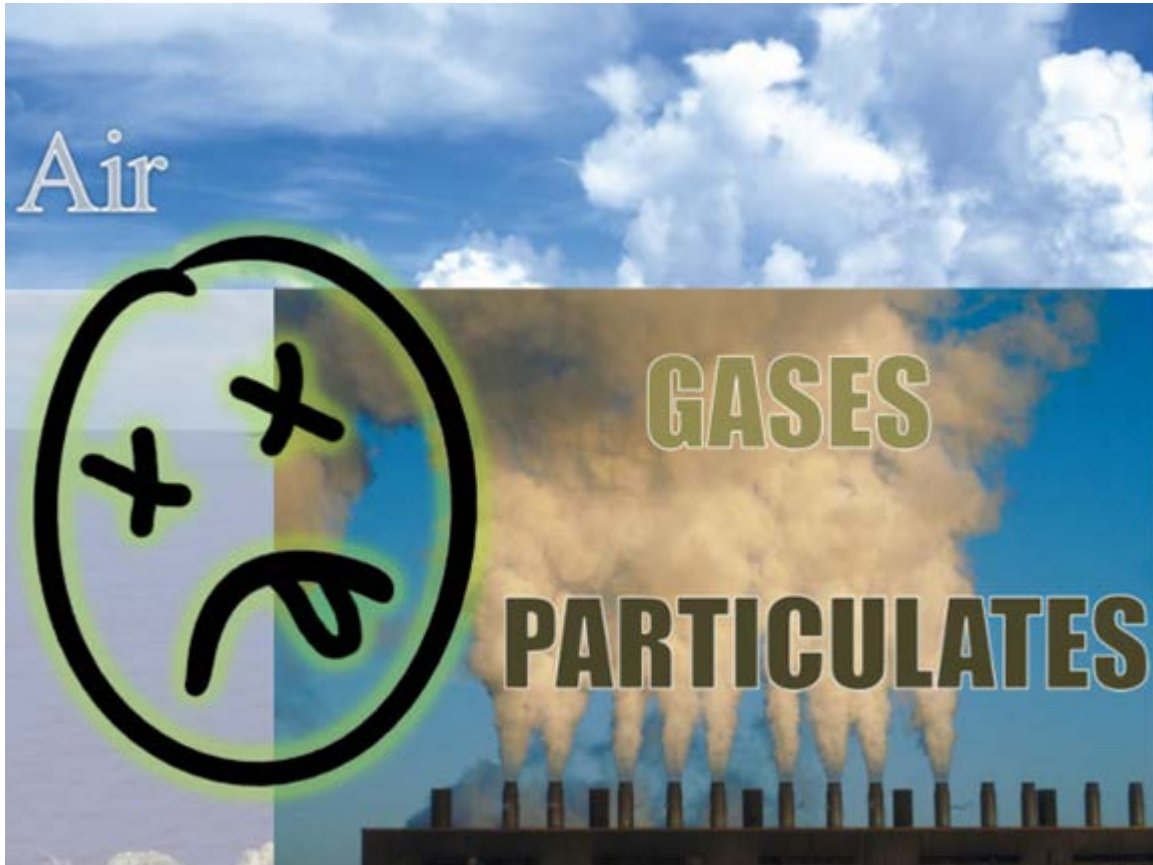
**Land: Become Involved**



Even though this problem is a global health issue, you might know of areas near where you live that used to be farm land or natural spaces, but are now developed with houses, businesses, or other buildings. It is important that communities are involved in voicing their opinions to their governments on how to best use the natural resources in the area.

**Module 8: A Drive Through the Community**  
**Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment**

**Air: Pollution**



Air pollution occurs in our country every single day, particularly in large cities or where manufacturing emits gases. The pollution of the air has many negative implications for humans, plants, and animals, and can have harmful effects on their health. Air pollution occurs either through gases or particulates.

## Module 8: A Drive Through the Community Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment

### Air: Byproducts



Many of the gases that affect the air you breathe, and simultaneously your health, are by-products of burning various fossil fuels, and even renewable resources. One gas that can be extremely harmful to humans, and may even result in death, is carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is colorless and odorless, making its presence virtually unknown. Sources of carbon monoxide production include the fumes expelled from many kinds of vehicles, and the smoke generated from tobacco products.

**Module 8: A Drive Through the Community**  
**Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment**

**Air: Greenhouse Effect**



Another gas you may have heard of that has an adverse effect on the environment is carbon dioxide. When significant amounts of fossil fuels and renewable resources, such as wood, are burned, this gas is released into the air in large amounts. The presence of too much carbon dioxide that can be absorbed by plants has been cited as being largely responsible for what experts call the Greenhouse Effect.



## Module 8: A Drive Through the Community Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment

### Air: Particulates



Particulates are another form of air pollution and are minuscule particles that travel throughout the air. Examples of particulates include spores produced from mold or plants, dust, ashes, and soot. The Environmental Protection Agency cites that approximately sixty thousand people in the United States die annually from respiratory complications that result from breathing in particulates. Some of the most dangerous substances that produce particulates include lead and asbestos. Lead and asbestos are two materials that were commonly used in the production of buildings. Lead was primarily used in paint products, and asbestos was often used as insulation for houses, because it is not flammable. Because of the dangerous nature of these materials, many buildings that were made with lead and asbestos products have been destroyed in recent years in order to prevent complications for individuals living in or around them. It is important for a community to know of any lead or asbestos in their homes.

**Module 8: A Drive Through the Community**  
**Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment**

**Water: Pollution**



You may already know that waste deposited into landfills can pollute water supplies. Unfortunately, there are many other factors that affect water in adverse ways.

Often, raw sewage is dumped into water supplies in overwhelming amounts. If the amount of sewage dumped into a water supply is too large to be decomposed by organisms in the water, the water supply is considered unsanitary, and no longer suitable for public use. Individuals who use this water, despite its unsuitable nature, may suffer from serious illnesses.

**Module 8: A Drive Through the Community**  
**Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment**

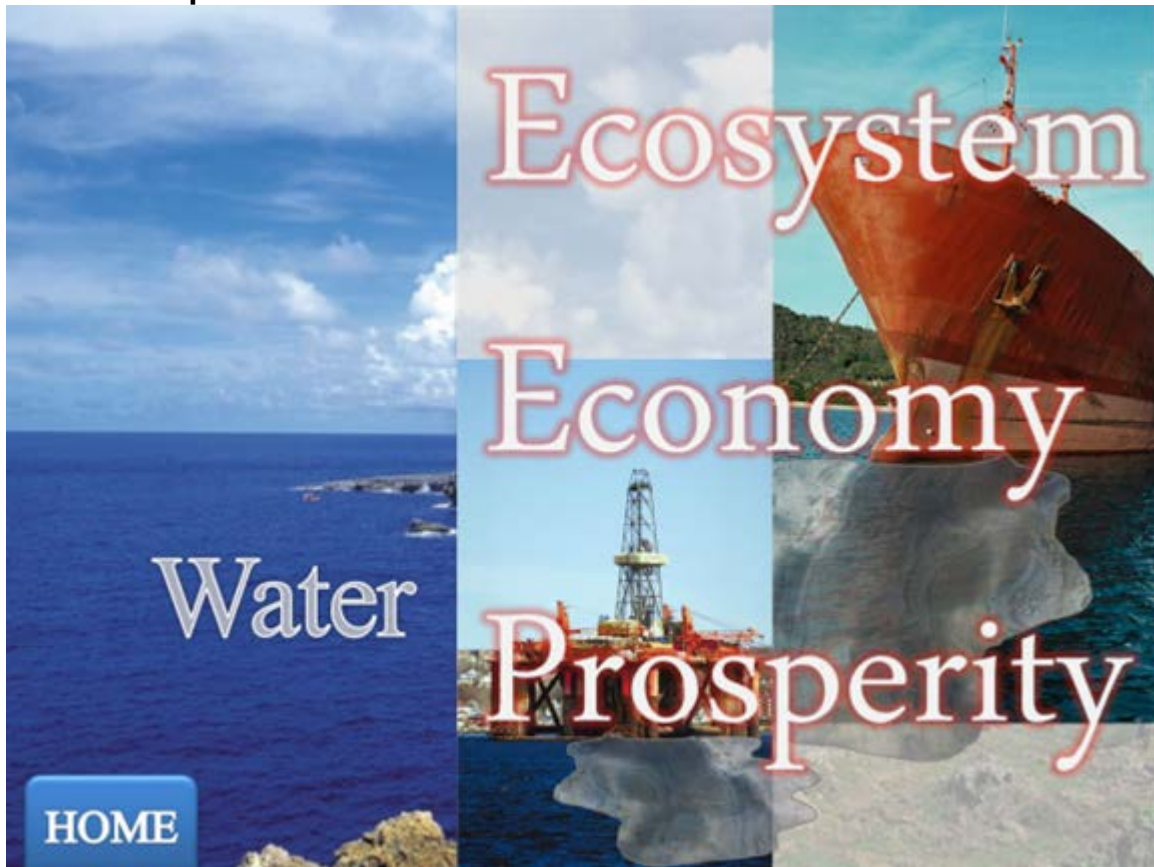
**Water: Runoff**



Much of the water pollution that occurs in our country is a result of runoff. Runoff is groundwater that flows into streams, lakes, and rivers, and has become contaminated as a result of pollution. Pesticides and herbicides often pollute our local water supplies when people use them to kill unwanted pests and weeds. These pollutants are extremely harmful to many species, and can even be toxic. Other pollutants that affect water supplies through the result of runoff are common household-cleaning products, such as bleach and detergent, and even animal feces when left in residential areas. That is why it is an individual's and a community's duty to responsibly use and dispose of pesticides, herbicides, and household-cleaning products, and to properly clean up after domesticated animals, like cats and dogs.

**Module 8: A Drive Through the Community**  
**Topic 2 Content: Your Community's Environment**

**Water: Oil Spill**



Large ships traveling through the ocean transport much of the oil that is used in the United States and around the world. Any form of transportation has the potential for accidents, and unfortunately, there have been accidents relating to the transportation of oil. Oil spills have deadly consequences for several species of the ocean, and can make their habitats unlivable. Oil spills can also occur when offshore drilling malfunctions, and immense amounts of oil are released into the ocean. Oil spills are extremely difficult to clean up, and can negatively affect the ecosystem, economy, and prosperity of a region. It can take quite a long time for an ecosystem to recover from a major oil spill.