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Against The Fires Of Hell: The Environmental Disaster Of The Gulf War



Synopsis

A dramatic account of the capping of burning oil wells in Kuwait presents a powerful vision of the irreversible damage that has been inflicted upon the planet by modern warfare. 25,000 first printing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Through interviews with scientists, firefighters and Kuwaiti citizens, plus firsthand observations, freelance science reporter Hawley assesses the environmental impact of the Gulf war. It is a grim story: the largest waterborne oil spill in history occurred; smoke and petroleum fog from oil-well fires covered an area more than twice the size of Alaska; military activities of both sides produced wide-scale disruption of desert pavement leading to more frequent and severe dust storms; land mines and unexploded ordnance pose a continuing threat to the population. Hawley equates conditions in the Gulf area to the Bhopal and Chernobyl disasters. He charges that the Kuwaiti government downplayed possible health risks, and that efforts to protect wildlife areas were secondary to sheltering industrial facilities. Hawley describes the firefighting activities; by November 1991, the firefighters had the largest nonmilitary vehicle and equipment fleet in the world. He follows the cleanup efforts on the oil spill and discusses the smoke plumes that covered Kuwait. In a final chapter Hawley examines the health crisis in Iraq after the war. He shows in deadly detail the interconnected problems of power loss, waterborne infectious diseases, shortages of food and medicine. A well-documented and powerful statement on the ecological consequences of war. Author tour. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Hawley recounts the enormous and successful effort to cap the burning Kuwaiti oil wells, then goes on to show that this, the most visible cleanup effort, was only the beginning. He describes the enormous ecological consequences of an oil spill 40 times larger than the Exxon Valdez. Hawley, a science journalist, raises many more questions than he answers with this book. Why has the United States consistently understated and blocked access to information about harm to the environment in the wake of the Gulf War? Did Kuwait deliberately endanger its citizens by covering up the effects of spilled and burning oil? Has the damage in Kuwait affected the region's environment? Hawley mixes statistics and personal anecdotes to create a telling picture of an appalling environmental disaster. Recommended for general collections.- Randy Dykhuis, OCLC, Dublin, OhioCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is the most complete history of the oil well fire fighting effort I have seen. It even documents my contribution to the effort, the use of nitrogen injected into a "well casing chimney" to put out a well on April 7, 2010. (see page 24).

This book offers an excellent overview, in clear language, of Saddam's bizarre act of environmental terrorism against Kuwait, the Arabian (or Persian) Gulf, and the world after he was ejected from Kuwait by the American-led coalition in early 1991. The author describes the oil spills, the fires, and their environmental and health effects.

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