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## Hydropower

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### Hydropower Basics

Flowing water creates energy that can be captured and turned into electricity. This is called *hydropower*. Hydropower is currently the largest source of renewable power, generating nearly 10% of the electricity used in the United States.

The most common type of hydropower plant uses a dam on a river to store water in a reservoir. Water released from the reservoir flows through a turbine, spinning which, in turn, activates a generator to produce electricity. But hydropower does not necessarily require a large dam. Some hydropower plants just use a small canal to channel the river water through a turbine.

Another type of hydropower plant—called a *pumped storage plant*—can even store power. The power is sent from a power grid into the electric generators. The generators then spin the turbines backward, which causes the turbines to pump water from a river or lower reservoir to an upper reservoir, where the power is stored. To use the power, the water is released from the upper reservoir back down into the river or lower reservoir. This spins the turbines forward, activating the generators to produce electricity.

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Content Last Updated: 08/10/2006