



# British Thermal Units



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## British Thermal Units

One unit for quantifying energy consumption is the British Thermal Unit (BTU). One BTU is the amount of energy needed to heat one pound of water by one degree Fahrenheit at one atmosphere of air pressure.

Although BTUs are useful for discussing home furnaces, they are too small a unit for meaningful discussion of energy impacts of highway projects. Instead, it is helpful to convert energy impacts into units that the public can understand more easily. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that the average gallon of U.S. gasoline in 2009 contained approximately 124,238 BTU.

Suppose that by relieving congestion, a highway project would reduce energy consumption by 250 million BTU per day. This could instead be described as saving the equivalent of about 2,000 gallons of gasoline per day.



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