

China's monopoly on 17 key elements sets stage for supply crisis

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China's monopoly on the global supply of elements critical for production of computer hard disc drives, hybrid-electric cars, military weapons, and other key products — and its increasingly strict limits on exports — is setting the stage for a crisis in the United States. That's the topic of the cover story of Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN), ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

C&EN Senior Editor Mitch Jacoby and Contributing Editor Jessie Jiang explain that the situation involves a family of chemical [elements](#) that may soon start to live up to their name, the "rare earths." [China](#) has virtually cornered the global market on them, and produces most of the world's supply. Since 2005, China has been raising prices and restricting exports, most recently in 2010, fostering a potential supply crisis in the U.S.

The article describes how the U.S. is now responding to this emerging crisis. To boost supplies, for instance, plans are being developed to resume production at the largest U.S. rare-earth mine — Mountain Pass in southern California — which has been dormant since 2002. The U.S. Department of Energy and the Department of Defense are among the government agencies grappling with the problem.

More information: "Securing the Supply of Rare Earths", This story is available at pubs.acs.org/cen/coverstory/88/8835cover.html

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