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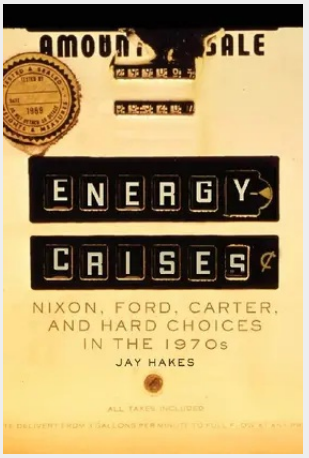
Energy Crises

Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Hard Choices in the 1970s



The 1970s were a decade of historic American energy crises—major interruptions in oil supplies from the Middle East, the country's most dangerous nuclear accident, and chronic shortages of natural gas. In Energy Crises, Jay Hakes brings his expertise in energy and presidential history to bear on the questions of why these crises occurred, how different choices might have prevented or ameliorated them, and what they have meant for the half-century since—and likely the half-century ahead. Hakes deftly intertwines the domestic and international aspects of the long-misunderstood fuel shortages that still affect our lives today. This approach, drawing on previously unavailable and inaccessible records, affords an insider's view of decision-making by three U.S. presidents, the influence of their sometimes-combative aides, and their often tortuous relations with the rulers of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Hakes skillfully dissects inept federal attempts to regulate oil prices and allocation, but also identifies the decade's more positive legacies—from the nation's first massive commitment to the development of alternative energy sources other than nuclear power, to the initial movement toward a less polluting, more efficient energy economy. The 1970s brought about a tectonic shift in the world of energy. Tracing these consequences to their origins in policy and practice, Hakes makes their lessons available at a critical moment—as the nation faces the challenge of climate change resulting from the burning of fossil fuels.

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