



Rodney's Take

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Preparing for the Rising Tide

I lived in New York City and Jackson, WY, years ago. Even then, air conditioners were ubiquitous in those areas. Yes, some people went without one, but they experienced many uncomfortable days in July and August, to say the least. While most homes across the Southeast have built-in heat, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, many still have window units. The difference is economics. If you don't have an HVAC, you buy window units when you scrape together enough money, even if it's to get a second-hand unit. When your circumstances improve, you rent or buy a housing unit that has built-in HVAC.

Now, the most populated country on the planet is going through this metamorphosis at lightning speed, and it's going to push the world's fossil fuel consumption well past any agreement among U.N. members.

At the last estimate, roughly 300 million of India's 1.4 billion people had the comfort of air conditioning (AC). The other 1.1 billion spend six or seven months each year in sweltering heat. As more Indians buy or rent AC units, they'll jack up the ambient air temperature in densely populated areas because their ACs create heat.

The Indian government estimates that 50% of the population, or another 400 million people, will have access to AC by 2037. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that by 2050, one billion Indians will have access, or 233% more Indians than today. I'm thrilled with their progress and wish them the best, but AC units don't power themselves. It will take a lot of

electricity to keep all those compressors whirring. In fact, the IEA estimates that power consumption for AC for just India will surpass all power consumption on the continent of Africa.

Indian officials are confident they are up to the task. They are building coal-fired and natural-gas power plants at a rapid pace. I can't and wouldn't blame them. As I sit in my comfortable home, run errands in my comfortable car, and fly to visit family, I'm in no position to tell Indians or anyone else to make decisions that might not be good for them personally but (possibly) will improve the planet.

We should keep this at top of mind when considering that General Motors (NYSE: GM) recently reported blowout earnings, led by sales of gas-guzzling trucks and SUVs while EVs stacked up at the backs of the lots. Individual choices are important, whether it's for basic comfort or expensive vehicles.

Mitigation is a great idea, but adaptation is possible. Worldwide, we will end up with a combination.

Rodney

Got a question or comment? You can contact us at info@hsdent.com