



Throw Forward Thursday: The end of sand

I spy with my little eye something that is everywhere around us. It's in the foundations and the walls and the roof of the building that you're in, it's in the paint on those walls, it's in the glass on the screen that you're looking at this video through, and it's in your glasses if you're wearing any.

It's everywhere. Do you know what it is? It's sand. We need sand for pretty much everything in the world that we're living, and here's the problem, we're running out of sand.

Welcome to Throw Forward Thursday, my name is Graham Codington, and let's jump forward about 30 or 40 years to when the world has run out of sand. This is a disaster. This world that has no sand in it.

Run out of sand, you say? How is that even possible? We use sand to talk about something that is as numerous as the stars in the universe and the sand on the seashores, except that we are rapidly running out of sand. There are different types of sand, desert sand, sand that is made by wind is not really that useful to us, It's too fine, we can't use it. What we really need is sand made by water, ocean, and river sand, and that is a commodity. It is the second most used commodity after water on the planet. We don't really charge people for it, although we should, and we are definitely running out of it.

We have already nearly run out of sand that has silica in it. That's where we get silicon from. There are other ways to get silicon, but that's the easiest way. And that's part of why we have a massive chip shortage in the world.

But then we use sand for everything from cement, that's the main reason to use sand, to put it in paint, to make glass out of it, and genuinely we are running out of it. There is sand mafia in different parts of the world. Countries are stealing sand from each other and it's causing big international situations.

Yes, maybe like me, you hadn't heard about this, and maybe like me, you hadn't been thinking about this. But if you know that we need to be worried about water

and running out of water, then you should also know that we are running out of sand at about the same rate. And if we run out of sand, we run out of ways that we currently know how to build the world around us. We need sand and we are running out of it.

Probably the best solution, although it's not the easiest, is to do more recycling. So, when we are finished using concrete and cement, we don't just throw it away, we recycle it, and also using recycling to turn other materials into construction, materials that we can use. But we need to be talking about this, we need to be thinking about this and we need to take our usage of sand a lot more seriously. And for countries that have got sand resources, which is all countries, we need to be looking at it as a national key asset, making sure that we are protecting it and using it wisely.

Yes, sand might be as numerous as the sand on the seashores, but we're running out of it, and we need to do something about that. Throw forward Thursday sometimes surprising, sometimes scary. Today, I think both the end of sand, and the end of the world as we know it, really.

Join me every Thursday as we look at the future, sometimes unexpectedly, and sometimes very scary. I'll see you next week, as we continue this end of series.

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