

New Zealand coal production up slightly in 2008

30 July 2009 - Coal production in New Zealand in 2008 was 4.9 million tonnes, up 1.5% from the previous year's output of 4.8 million tonnes.

Production of bituminous coals from the South Island, nearly all for export, rose to almost 2.5 million tonnes in 2008, up from 2.0 million tonnes in 2007.

Sub-bituminous coal production, substantially from the Waikato region of the North Island, fell to 2.2 million tonnes last year from almost 2.6 million tonnes in 2007.

Of this sub-bituminous coal, western Southland mines accounted for 195,000 tonnes, West Coast for 135,000 tonnes with smaller amounts from Otago and Southland mining areas.

Although lignite makes up 80% of national coal resources, output was 253,000 tonnes in 2008, little changed on previous years. Nearly all lignite production was from Southland mines.

Five underground and 20 opencast mines were operating in 2008. Over 63% of national production was from two large opencast operations at Rotowaro near Huntly and Stockton in the Buller field. Both are operated by state-owned Solid Energy, which is responsible for about 80% of national coal production.

Exports of bituminous coal went mainly to India and Japan with smaller quantities going to Chile, South Africa, Brazil, China, USA and Australia.

The biggest domestic users of coal last year were the Huntly power station (2 million tonnes) and the Glenbrook steel mill (around 750,000 tonnes).

Imports of coal, largely to supply the Huntly station, declined by 18% to 600,000 tonnes.

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Sources: Crown Minerals, Ministry of Economic Development's 2008 Energy Data File and Lindsay Clark

