

Overview

Industry snapshot

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Overview of New Zealand's Coal Industry

New Zealand has extensive coal resources, mainly in the Waikato and Taranaki regions of the North Island and the West Coast, Otago and Southland regions of the South Island. It has been estimated that national in-ground resources of all coals are over 15 billion tonnes, of which 80 percent are South Island lignites.

Lignite is New Zealand's largest fossil fuel energy resource. The main deposits are well known, with technically and economically recoverable quantities in the 10 largest deposits established at over 6 billion tonnes.

The South Island lignites are being evaluated for their potential as a feedstock for large-scale petrochemical processing into a range of possible energy products, including transport fuels, briquettes and fertilizers.

Sub-bituminous and bituminous in-ground resources are about 3.5 billion tonnes, but recoverable quantities of these coals are uncertain.

New Zealand coal resources survey

New Zealand's coal resources are generally well explored. A major Government-funded coal exploration programme, known as the [New Zealand Coal Resources Survey \(NZCRS\)](#), explored almost all of New Zealand's realistic coal prospects between 1975 and 1989.

More than 1,800 holes were drilled and extensive resource evaluation, geotechnical, geophysical, utilisation, environmental and mining feasibility studies were carried out.

The discovery of very large resources of lignite in Otago and Southland also led to a series of investigations in the 1980s by the Liquid Fuels Trust Board to evaluate the potential of the lignites for conversion to transport fuels.

[Read more on lignite resources.](#)

Energy Data File

The New Zealand Energy Data File is an annual publication by the Ministry of Economic Development that provides comprehensive statistics and supporting information on New Zealand's energy supply, demand and prices.

For more information on Coal check out the online version of the [Energy Data File](#).

Coal Resources in the Encyclopedia of New Zealand

Explore coal resources further in the [Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#).