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Phases of mineral exploration and production

Prospecting and exploration activities are used to identify the location and size of mineral deposits before possibly mining the resource.

The progression from prospecting, through exploration, and possibly to mining can take decades and a range of regulators are involved at various stages. Depending on the activity this can include:

- [District and regional councils](#)
- [The Environmental Protection Authority](#)
- [WorkSafe New Zealand](#)
- [Maritime New Zealand](#)
- [The Department of Conservation](#)
- [Heritage New Zealand](#)

The regulatory system is designed to ensure minerals development is undertaken safely and responsibly across the three phases.

Prospecting

Prospecting is often the very first stage in the search for mineral deposits. It includes low impact work to search for mineral deposits in a permitted area.

Exploration

Exploration involves more detailed search for and assessment of mineral resources including data gathering over smaller, more specific areas to test if the resource is commercially viable.

Production

If a resource discovered during the exploration phase is considered commercially viable, operators will begin the process to commercially extract minerals and coal.

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