

# Bulletin 2022-04

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## New Direction for Coal Activity in the Eastern Slopes of Alberta's Rocky Mountains

On March 4, the Government of Alberta released a [report](#) from a coal policy committee it formed in early 2021 to gather feedback on future policy as it relates to coal development in Alberta.

In response to the report, the Government of Alberta, through [Ministerial Order 002/2022](#), has directed the AER to continue its suspension of all approvals, and to not accept any new applications, for coal exploration activities on Category 2 lands. This suspension is consistent with [previous direction](#) that was provided to the AER last year and will remain in place until written notice is given by the minister of Energy or the minister of Environment and Parks.

The order further directs us to suspend approvals, and to not accept new applications, for coal exploration and development on Category 3 and 4 lands, except those that are related to an advanced coal project or an active approval for a coal mine (defined below). This direction will also remain in place until written notice is given by the minister of Energy or the minister of Environment and Parks.

The order defines “advanced coal projects” and “active approvals for coal mines” as follows:

- **Advanced coal project** – Proposed coal projects where applicants have submitted a project summary to the AER to determine whether an [environmental impact assessment](#) is required for the proposed project.
- **Active approval for a coal mine** – Existing coal projects that have been granted a licence to operate under the *Coal Conservation Act*.

This means that advanced coal projects will continue to be reviewed by the AER to ensure any proposed exploration or development is safe, environmentally responsible, and meets all requirements, and that active coal mines can continue to operate on Category 3 and 4 lands within all AER requirements.

The order does not restrict abandonment and reclamation, security, or safety activities on Category 2, 3, and 4 lands. Operators are permitted to proceed with abandonment and reclamation activities and to enter these sites to

- monitor and ensure the site is left in a state that is safe to the environment, wildlife and public, and
- perform routine checks and maintenance at the site to ensure all property and equipment is secure from wildlife access, vandalism, and weather events.

Under the 1976 [\*Coal Development Policy for Alberta\*](#), which is currently in effect, provincial lands are classified into four numbered categories with respect to coal exploration and development. The [coal land classification map](#) shows these categories. Under the policy, no coal exploration or development activities are permitted on Category 1 lands.

We will continue to implement future policy direction as it is received from the Government of Alberta. If you have any questions, contact our Customer Contact Centre by phone at 403-297-8311 (1-855-297-8311 toll free) or by email at [inquiries@acr.ca](mailto:inquiries@acr.ca).