

U.S. mineral production, imports rise

Manuel Quinones, Environment & Energy Publishing, 1-31-12

The value of U.S. mineral production increased 12 percent from \$66 billion in 2010 to \$74 billion last year, the U.S. Geological Survey said today as part of the its annual release of production statistics and trends.

The agency said a second consecutive year of growth is a sign that the non-fuel mineral industry, mainly metals, continued recovering from the economic downturn. There was a 23 percent increase in the value of domestic metal production in 2011 compared to the previous year, USGS said.

While high prices helped boost metal mining, the value of non-metal minerals extracted also went up. It increased 3 percent in 2011, the first rise since 2007.

"Minerals remained fundamental to the U.S. economy, contributing to the real gross domestic product at several levels, including mining, processing, and manufacturing finished products," the report says. "Minerals' contribution to the GDP increased for the second consecutive year."

The value of coal production rose from \$38.6 billion to about \$39.2 billion.

Employment increased in several mining categories, especially metals mining, which spiked from 29,000 workers to an estimated 95,000.

Still, USGS said U.S. dependence on imports continued increasing in a three-decade trend. Foreign sources accounted for more than 50 percent of domestic consumption for 43 minerals in 2011, including manganese and rare earth elements.

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