During the fourth quarter of 2016, Kentucky produced almost 11 million tons of coal, an increase of 6.6 percent from the third quarter. Western Kentucky mines increased coal production by 3.9 percent, to produce 6.7 million tons for the quarter. Eastern Kentucky mines also increased production in the quarter to produce just over 4.2 million tons, an 11 percent increase from last quarter. During the fourth quarter of 2016, underground mines in Kentucky produced 8.5 million tons, while surface mines produced 2.4 million tons.

Preliminary data indicated that Kentucky fell from its ranking as the third largest coal producing state in the U.S. during 2016, a spot it had held since 1994. The Commonwealth now ranks fourth in the country in coal production, trailing Wyoming, West Virginia, and Illinois. Illinois produced 43.8 million tons in 2016, almost 1.3 million more tons than Kentucky. Kentucky was the country’s largest coal producer from 1971 until 1988, and second largest coal producer from 1989 to 1994.
Eastern Kentucky coal production decreased in 2016 by 40.6 percent to 16.7 million tons of coal, 58 percent from underground mines and 42 percent from surface mines.

Eastern Kentucky underground coal production during the fourth quarter of 2016 was 2.6 million tons, an increase of 20.9 percent from the third quarter. Surface production in eastern Kentucky decreased by 2 percent to 1.6 million tons in the final quarter of 2016.

With the exception of Magoffin and Johnson counties, counties in Eastern Kentucky experienced decreases in coal production during 2016. Pike County reduced coal production by 40.1 percent. Pike county still remained the highest coal-producing county in eastern Kentucky and fourth-highest coal producing county in Kentucky. This year, coal production ceased in Wolfe, Laurel, and Clay counties.
Western Kentucky mined 25.9 million tons of coal in 2016, a decrease of 22.4 percent from 2015. Underground mines accounted for 89 percent of regional production in 2016.

Western Counties | 2016 Tonnage | Annual Change
--- | --- | ---
Union | 8,607,528 | -5.6%
Ohio | 4,742,266 | -29.7%
Hopkins | 4,281,379 | -37.4%
Webster | 3,744,015 | -36.2%
Muhlenberg | 3,025,787 | -15.2%
McLean | 1,274,873 | 51.2%
Daviess | 194,923 | -41.8%

The top 3 coal producing counties in the Commonwealth are located in western Kentucky: Union, Ohio, and Hopkins. In 2016, Union County produced 8.6 million tons, a 5.6 percent decrease for the year. Hopkins County suffered a significant decline in coal output in 2016, falling 37.4 percent to 4.3 million tons. McLean County was the only county to increase production in western Kentucky, boosting output 51.2 percent to over 1.2 million tons.
As of December 31, 2016, an estimated 6,371 persons were employed at coal mines within Kentucky. Although employment increased by 47 people during the final quarter of 2016, coal employment decreased by 2,030 workers, or 24.2 percent, when compared with the fourth quarter of 2015. Reductions in employment include layoffs, furloughs, and temporarily idling of coal mines.

As of December 31, 2016, there were 3,742 persons employed at eastern Kentucky coal mines, an increase of 0.7 percent from the third quarter of 2016. Coal mines in western Kentucky increased employment by 0.8 percent to 2,629 in the final quarter of 2016. To check for an updated version of this report or for more detailed information on coal production in Kentucky, please visit us online at: energy.ky.gov/Pages/CoalFacts.aspx.
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In order to provide the public with timely access to these data, this report uses the best-available estimate for each factor at the time of publication. Data for Q4-2016 are preliminary and subject to revision. Data for previous dates have been revised. This report is produced by the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet using data from numerous sources including the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration, the Kentucky Department of Revenue, and the Kentucky Division of Mine Safety. To check for an updated version of this report or for more detailed information on coal production in Kentucky, please visit us online at: energy.ky.gov/Pages/CoalFacts.aspx.