

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF BLASTING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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ABSTRACT

The United Kingdom, although a relatively small island, has a wealth of mineral deposits, coal, granite, limestone, gypsum, lead, florspar, etc.

Coal is a major source of energy with 71 opencast coal sites, 52 using explosives. Many of these sites are in rural areas, the average area worked being 250 acres. The smallest is 35 acres, the largest 2,000 acres, but only 600 acres can be operated at any one time.

Due to the problems that exist, it is not possible to acquire accurate figures of explosives used in blasting operations, but the nearest estimate is 50,000 short tons, (this does not include mineral extraction in Northern Ireland).

A number of towns and cities are on strata which must be blasted for service tunnels, sewers, etc. It must be pointed out that many of the tunnels are of small dimensions and of such length that installation of heading machines is unviable.

Demolition by the use of explosives has always had its place, and in 1979 the first block of multi-storey flats was demolished by controlled blast techniques.

Out Institute of Explosives Engineers formed in 1976 is increasing in members and students, and examinations are now being taken to qualify for membership.