



**1** Workers use trucks called backhoes to strip away layers of land to uncover the coal deposits. Dump trucks carry away the unwanted dirt.

**2** Backhoes are used to scoop up the coal deposits. Dump trucks then carry away the coal to be processed. Most of the processed coal is used as a source of fuel.

**ILLUSTRATION** Strip-mining is one way to get coal from the land. What do you think is done with the dirt that is taken away?

## Coal

Kentucky is the third-largest producer of coal in the United States. Coal mined in the state is sold for billions of dollars each year.

### Mining Coal

Coal is mined in two ways. One kind of mining is done underground. The coal is dug up and taken away. The other kind involves stripping off the top of the land to get the coal.

Strip-mining removes trees and soil and changes the look of the land. Afterward, it is difficult to get trees and plants to grow as they did before.

Today, people understand how important the land is. In fact, the law now states that after mining, the land must be reclaimed, or changed back

to a usable form. Most land that is strip-mined is reclaimed as flat land. This land can be used for farming or other human use.

### Using Coal

Most of Kentucky's coal is used to produce electricity. Nearly all of the state's electricity comes from coal. The coal is burned to heat water, which creates steam. The steam runs machinery that creates electricity.

However, smoke from burning coal makes the air unhealthy to breathe. There are ways to make the burning of coal cleaner. Still, more work needs to be done to protect our air—another precious natural resource.

**READING CHECK** **MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS**  
What are the two main methods of mining coal?