

Applying for approval of a main operating plan for mining

If your company wants to explore, extract and process certain mineral resources, you must draw up a main operating plan, among other things. You must apply to the competent authority for approval of this main operating plan.

Competent Department

- [Landesamt für Bergbau, Energie und Geologie | Geozentrum Hannover](#)

Basic information

In order to set up and run an exploration, extraction or processing operation, you as an entrepreneur need an approved main operating plan. An operating plan is used to monitor operations. It generally includes comprehensive explanations and planning documents for planned mining measures, for example with regard to

- Location and extent,
- technical implementation,
- scheduling,
- possible effects on people and the environment,
- measures to avoid and minimize negative impacts on the environment,
- operational and occupational safety.

The license allows you to explore, extract and process mineral resources that are subject to the Federal Mining Act. These include energy resources such as hard coal and lignite or crude oil and natural gas, but also metals, salts, geothermal energy and lithium.

Requirements

Certain requirements must be met before you can obtain approval for your main operating plan:

- Your project must not conflict with any overriding public interests.
- You must be able to prove that you have the officially issued authorization for the exploration or extraction of non-mining mineral resources or the rights over natural mineral resources.
- You must be able to prove that your company and your managerial staff or representatives have the necessary reliability as well as the required expertise and physical fitness.

- You must take all necessary safety measures to prevent risks to the life and health of employees and third parties in the company. These measures must also ensure the protection of material assets.
- Your work must not impair other mineral resources whose protection is in the public interest.
- The earth's surface must be protected in the interests of personal safety and public traffic.
- The waste produced must be properly reused or disposed of.
- You must take precautions to ensure that
 - the surfaces can subsequently be made usable again to the extent required by the circumstances,
 - the safety of other mining operations is not jeopardized,
 - the search for or extraction of mineral resources does not result in any harmful consequences for the general public and, in the case of mining operations in the area of the continental shelf or coastal waters:
 - shipping facilities and signs are not impaired and
 - shipping and shipping lanes, airspace, fishing and flora and fauna are not unreasonably impaired
 - underwater cables and pipelines as well as oceanographic or other scientific research are not impaired more than is unavoidable under the circumstances and
 - the harmful effects on the sea are kept to a minimum
- You may be required to provide the competent authority with evidence of a security deposit with an appropriate sum insured, a bank guarantee, letter of comfort or similar covering the above risks.

Procedure

You can apply for approval of your main operating plan online via the "BergPass" platform or directly to your competent mining authority.

Apply for approval online:

- Go to the "BergPass" online platform and log in.
- To apply, you will need a BundID and an identity card or residence permit with an active online ID function.
- Upload the required documents as a file.

Apply directly to the competent mining authority for approval:

- You must prepare your main operating plan in such a way that both the approval requirements and other concerns such as groundwater and nature conservation are comprehensively described. For complex projects, it is advisable to contact your competent authority and coordinate the required application documents.
- Submit the application and all required documents to the competent authority

Further procedural steps:

- The competent authority will check your application and the documents submitted for completeness. If any documents are missing, the authority will contact you.
- The mining authority decides on the approval.
- You will receive a notification electronically and by post informing you of the decision on your application.
- The approval may contain ancillary provisions (requirements, conditions, time limits), which you must comply with accordingly and which will be reviewed by the mining authority.

You will also receive a notice of costs. Pay the fees.

Legal bases

- [§ 51 Bundesberggesetz \(BBergG\)](#)
- [§ 52 Abs. 3-4 Bundesberggesetz \(BBergG\)](#)
- [§ 52 Abs. 1 Bundesberggesetz \(BBergG\)](#)
- [§ 55 Bundesberggesetz \(BBergG\)](#)

More information

Term of the main operating plan

The period described in your main operating plan usually covers several years. The responsible mining authority decides on the duration on a case-by-case basis. An important criterion here is the foreseeability of the operating plan. In practice, the term can be extended by a few years without a new main operating plan having to be drawn up and comprehensively reviewed in a mining law procedure.

If you interrupt your operations for up to 2 years, you can legally continue to operate during this time. Only if the interruption lasts longer than 2 years do you have to obtain a permit from the competent authority.

Exceptions and special features

You are exempt from the operating plan obligation if you want to explore an area as an exploration company and in doing so

- do not plan to deepen the surface,
- do not use mechanical power,
- do not carry out any work underground and
- do not use explosive substances or explosive substances intended for blasting.

If your operation is of low hazard or significance, you can be exempted from the obligation to plan operations if

- the protection of your employees and third parties and
- the reutilization of the surface is ensured, and
- your project is not located on the continental shelf.

If you wish to explore, extract and process mineral resources together with other companies, the competent authority may require you to draw up a joint operating plan.

In the case of projects that may have a significant impact on the population, you should inform the public concerned at an early stage, i.e. before submitting an application. In this way, public opinion can be incorporated into the company's planning before the plans are finalized.

What deadlines must be paid attention to?

You may only start your planned mining work once you have received approval for your main operating plan. As a rule, operating plans are approved for a limited period of time. If long-term planning is not possible, it may be necessary to submit a new main operating plan at short intervals, for example every 2 years. The main operating plan can be drawn up for a period of up to 8 years. Depending on the individual case, approval is initially granted for up to 4 years. Further extensions must be applied for separately in good time.

Objection period: 1 month

How long does it take to process

1 - 6 months.

The processing time varies greatly depending on the scope and complexity of the planned measures and the quality of the application documents. As a guide, you can expect 1 to 6 months.

What are the costs?

Several factors are included in the calculation of the actual costs, such as the economic value, the time required, expert opinions and expenses for official business outside the office or advice to the contractor plus the costs for the involvement of other authorities.