Industrial minerals continue to be one of the Illinois’ major mineral resource commodities, accounting for $1.22 billion in 2007. According to the 2007 U.S. Geological Survey mineral industry profile, Illinois ranked twentieth among the 50 states in total value of nonfuel mineral production. By value, crushed stone was the state’s leading industrial mineral, accounting for about 48% ($586 million) of the total, followed by portland cement, 25% ($305 million); construction sand and gravel, about 14% ($170 million); industrial sand, about 7% ($85 million); and lime, fuller’s earth, tripoli, and other nonfuel minerals, in decreasing order, for most of the remaining 6% ($73 million).

Since 1970, Illinois has been consistently among the top five leading states in production of crushed stone. Illinois also has continuously been a major producer of construction sand and gravel. In 2007, Illinois remained first among the 49 mineral-producing states in the production of industrial sand, tripoli, dolomite, and recycled cement concrete and sixth in crushed stone. Of the industrial minerals mined or manufactured in Illinois, those that have the highest value include crushed stone, cement, construction sand and gravel, and industrial sand. Crushed stone, construction sand and gravel, and portland cement combined continued to account for more than 85% of the value of Illinois’ nonfuel industrial minerals mined or manufactured.

Sand and gravel deposits are widely distributed throughout the state, but they are most abundant and of highest quality in northeastern Illinois. They are primarily extracted from glacial deposits in the central and northeastern parts of the state. Production of sand and gravel, however, has not increased significantly since the late 1960s. This is probably related to the better quality and larger reserves of crushed stone aggregate and the difficulty in securing permits for new sand and gravel operations due to public opposition. Dolomite, mined from the Silurian and Ordovician carbonates in northern Illinois, especially in the Chicago area, accounts for most of the stone produced in the state. Northeastern Illinois is one of the largest aggregate producing and consuming regions in the country and will likely remain so, long into the future. In the western and southern parts of the state, limestones of the Mississippian System are extracted for construction aggregate, cement manufacture, and other related purposes. Limited amounts of Pennsylvanian-age limestone occur in the central part of the state and are quarried where they are present near the surface.

In partial response to the opposition to new stone quarries and sand and gravel pits, companies continue to evaluate or pursue development of underground mines, especially in northeastern Illinois. Illinois has been ranked third in the amount of crushed stone produced from underground mining operations.