



MINING

Low copper prices force B.C. mine to cut operations, lay off 100 workers

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Imperial Metals Corp. is laying off more than one-third of the workforce at its Huckleberry mine in northwestern British Columbia because of low copper prices.

The Vancouver-based company — which also owns the Mount Polley and Red Chris mines — said it has suspended pit operations at Huckleberry but will continue milling stockpiled ore.

The decision will affect about 100 of Huckleberry's 260 employees near Houston, B.C., about 300 kilometres northwest of Prince George, B.C.

"While HML has made significant efforts to reduce operating costs at the Huckleberry mine, the realized savings have not been sufficient to offset declining copper prices," the company said.

Copper future contracts are currently trading at about US\$2.06 per pound — a level comparable to mid-2009 when the global economy was mired in a deep recession.