A specially-adapted NZ Defence Force robot will be sent into the mine, which is full of toxic fumes, to see if there are any signs of the men. A camera will be attached to the robot, which will also detect levels of dangerous methane and carbon dioxide gases.

Rescuers are on standby to enter the Pike River coal mine, with specialised equipment tailored to the conditions underground.

Coal Seam

Pit Bottom
Mining area, location of Friday's explosion

Drill site

Ventilation shaft above working face used for air testing

Access tunnel

Defence robot will enter mine through access tunnel

Fibre optic cable will run to ventilation shaft

Tunnel entrance

Access tunnel

Working face
Tunnels in operation at time of explosion

The miners haven't been heard from since a large explosion shortly before 4pm on Friday.

The drilling of a 162m-deep bore hole will also continue today.

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