



### [James D. Toole](#)

2013 Inductee into American Mining Hall of Fame

James D. Toole, past President and CEO of Southwest Energy, LLC, was born into a coal mining family in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania. He began his mining career working in open cut strip mines.

After graduating from King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and completing service in the U.S. Marine Corps, Toole was hired by the explosives division of Hercules Inc. in 1965. His first assignment was in the Minnesota Iron Range where he lived with his wife Molly. Three years later, Toole and his family were transferred to the Panama Canal Zone where he worked on the canal widening project.

After his work in Panama, a third transfer found Toole, Molly, and their three children in Tucson where copper mining was expanding. Also expanding was the Toole family with the addition of three more children in the following years.

In May 1973, Toole took an innovative approach to the application of bulk blasting agents; he left Hercules and founded Southwest Energy. Four months later, Southwest Energy purchased Hercules' Arizona operations. Soon Southwest began to broaden its business affiliations beyond Arizona. In early 1980 Southwest Energy took an equity position in Apache Powder Company, now known as Apache Nitrogen Products Inc. in Benson, Arizona.

After adding additional bulk loading capacity and blast hole drilling throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Southwest Energy formed a joint venture in 2000 with SASOL, a South African chemical and energy company. As a result of this joint venture, Southwest Energy gained access to explosive technologies, electronic detonators, and a unique form of ammonium nitrate prill called EXPAN. After three years, the joint venture dissolved when SASOL exited the global

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explosives market, leaving Southwest Energy in a stronger market position with expanded product capabilities.

In 2008 Southwest Energy created a new joint venture with Orica, the largest explosives company in the world based in Melbourne, Australia. With the innovative explosives technologies and strong manufacturing base of Orica, Southwest Energy continues to provide even greater value to its mining customers. Today, Southwest Energy has multiple facilities, distribution sites, and blasting operations across the western United States.

During the company's 40-year history, Toole believes that the greatest assets of Southwest Energy are the exceptional employees and the willingness of the company to share its profitability with all of its people and the communities where they live and work. Southwest Energy's mission has always been and continues to be the creation of opportunity for its employees by bringing ever increasing value to its customers.