

Murray Energy Corporation providing economic stimulus with jobs, affordable energy

Murray Energy Corporation is probably best known in southeastern Ohio for its three independent operating subsidiaries: The Ohio Valley Coal Company in Alledonia, OhioAmerican Energy, Inc. in Brilliant, and American Energy Corporation in Beallsville. Combined, these three companies and the mines they operate employ 1,200 Ohioans and produce some 14 million tons of coal annually.

But Murray Energy is recognized in several other states as well. Its subsidiaries also operate mines in Kentucky, Illinois and Utah. When the output of these mines is added to those in Ohio, Murray Energy is responsible for producing approximately 28 millions tons of coal each year, making it the largest independent coal mining company in the nation.

“We are very proud that Murray Energy Corporation provides more than 3,000 direct jobs in several states, and that we are able to maintain these jobs even as other industry sectors make steep cuts,” says Rob Murray, Vice President of Business Development and External Affairs, and son of company founder, Chairman and CEO Robert E. Murray. “These jobs are not only essential to our employees and their families, but also support thousands of secondary jobs.”

Pennsylvania State University conducts regular studies which conclude that each direct coal mining job creates up to 11 secondary jobs – meaning that Murray Energy helps support more than 13,000 jobs in Ohio alone, and some 36,000 nationwide.

“It can be easy to underestimate how important coal mining is to our economy,” Murray says. “Not only does the industry provide jobs, but it ensures that the energy we consume in our homes and to run our businesses remains affordable ... and affordable energy is the backbone of our economy.”

Coal Under Assault

It's no secret that coal is increasingly under attack from environmentalists, some media and now Washington.

President Obama has said he supports clean coal, but as a candidate vowed to bankrupt utilities that want to build coal-fired power plants. Environmental groups have been successful in fostering the belief that climate change is a direct result of coal-fired power plants and fossil fuels, and leaders in Congress are considering legislation to combat climate change that will make coal power substantially more expensive.

Watching what is unfolding in our nation's capitol has Murray concerned, but not for his company so much as the families that already struggle to afford energy.

“The median household income in the U.S. is just about \$50,000 per year. Many families that earn less than that are already spending up to a quarter of their after-tax earnings on

energy,” he says. “It doesn’t make sense to raise those costs. Families shouldn’t have to choose between electricity or food or health care. Higher costs would also be a huge blow to businesses and factories that rely on affordable energy to keep their costs down so their products can be competitive in the global marketplace.”

Coal, which provides approximately 52 percent of our nation’s electricity – and more than 85 percent of the electricity in the tri-state – is the primary reason that U.S. energy costs have remained affordable for so long. As a purely domestic energy resource, coal supplies and costs are not subject to the whims of foreign governments. It is also our nation’s most abundant energy resource, with a 200-plus year supply still to be mined within our own borders.

“Our company name is not Murray Coal, it’s Murray *Energy*,” says Murray. “Our business is the extraction of *energy* from the earth – the most affordable and reliable type of *American* energy – to power our homes, businesses and communities.”

Murray, like an increasing number of scientists, believes that most of the hype aimed at giving coal a bad name has been overblown. In addition, he says, coal fired electricity generation technology has made tremendous advances; today’s modern coal fired power plants create more energy using less coal, and with lower emissions, than ever before.

“Clearly, investing in research and technology has had significant and positive results. Coal plant emissions have dropped by more than half even though coal generation has tripled since 1970,” he says. “We certainly support continued investment in clean coal technology as a way to maximize the potential of our domestic energy resources and keep energy affordable.”

Technology Enhances Safety

Murray is well aware of the importance of investing in technology. Over the past several decades, technological advancements also have transformed coal mining – once considered among the most dangerous of occupations – into a high-tech operation that is safer than ever before.

“Advances in technology have changed coal mining in two primary ways, safety and productivity,” Murray says. “Mining machines, specialized equipment, and extensive employee safety training programs have made mines much more productive, allowing operators to produce more coal with fewer workers. It’s well documented that, statistically, the most productive coal mines in American are also among the safest, and vice versa.”

Computers also have had a substantial impact on coal mining, aiding in detecting and mapping coal reserves, modeling mine development and projecting production. Those types of applications not only help maximize a mine’s output, but also help operators assess mining conditions and workforce needs, and most important, enhance safety.

“We have computer terminals set up in the mines to monitor and control air flow, air quality and oxygen levels, and manage fire suppression systems. We can track the location of all of our miners throughout the mine, communicate with them and even operate machines remotely,” says Murray. “The ability to monitor conditions all over the mine and take action to correct problems immediately means our mines are safer and, as a result, our workers are safer.”

The Human Safety Factor

But inasmuch as technology enhances safety in the mine, Murray says it is no substitute for workers who are well-trained in safety procedures and who know what to do in an emergency.

The company maintains emergency Mine Rescue Teams and Fire Brigades at all of its mines, pays for numerous safety training programs throughout the year, and recently had Fire Brigade members at of its each mines certified at servicing the self-contained breathing apparatus used in emergencies where breathing support is required.

“Our rescue and fire teams are the best in the business,” Murray says proudly. “The members of the all-volunteer Mine Rescue Teams and Fire Brigades are trained to be first responders in the event of a mine-related emergency, and those members take that responsibility very seriously because they know that their actions could save the lives of their fellow miners...they wear it as a badge of honor.”

In fact, the Mine Rescue Teams from The Ohio Valley Coal Company and American Energy Corporation took first and second place, respectively, in the State’s first-ever mine rescue competition last fall in Cadiz. The rescue team from The American Coal Company’s (another Murray subsidiary) Galatia Mine complex in southern Illinois is one of the most decorated in the country, with a room full of trophies attesting to their skill in emergency mine rescue procedures.

“Having advanced equipment and top-notch safety procedures is extremely important,” says Murray. “But it is the workers knowing what to do who often mean the difference between averting a disaster or not.”

Coal an Economic Benefit

As a private, independent company, Murray Energy has no public shareholders to contend with and instead can focus all its attention on the development of its energy reserves, and building and maintaining a top-notch work force. The company is proud of its relationship with its employees and seeks to maintain a level of mutual trust and respect that are all too rare in many of today’s workplaces.

“We feel very good about being able to provide so many good jobs, and we believe we have a responsibility to the workers we employ,” Murray says. “They are the professionals who operate the equipment, who extract this vital energy resource from the ground and who keep our mines and our miner’s safe.”

Even as coal may come under attack, Murray Energy Corporation remains committed to seeing that this vital energy resource continues to support jobs, our economy and our nation's energy security, while embracing the technological advances and trained workforce that help the company produce 28 million tons of coal annually.

“Coal provides affordable energy and coal provides jobs,” says Murray. “When you think about it, coal is an important economic stimulus on its own, and, unlike foreign oil, it is an abundant and affordable source of domestic energy that is essential to American residents, businesses, and national security.”