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# Today's faces of Kentucky coal

## By way of explanation:

Today there is no such entity as a "typical" coal miner, even though many who work in the industry do so as part of a multi-generational family tradition.

Accordingly, in this series, we'll be profiling several individuals who are actively engaged in mining and representative of a new generation of mining professionals within Kentucky's vital coal industry.



Coal mining is most definitely in Brian Patton's DNA: his father was a University of Kentucky Mining Engineering graduate who managed large Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania mines owned by the steel industry; both of his grandfathers were underground coal miners; a great-grand-father operated a coal mine during the late 1920s; and his great-great-grandpa was an Irish immigrant coal miner.

Today, this fifth-generation coal man continues his family's legacy as President of James River Coal Services—currently in charge of three active surface mining operations—2 in Perry and one in Harlan County.

A typical work day? "I leave my home in Lexington at 4:30 in the morning, driving east to our mine operations—it's a 110-mile trip, one way. I confer by phone with both the night- and day-shift foremen enroute and arrive about 7 am to review costs and production before heading out to our on-site operations. I drive another 100 miles or so before returning to the main mine office to finalize correspondence—then I leave for home around 5:30 or 6, usually arriving back in Fayette County for dinner around 8."

Obviously, this man is committed to the coal industry. We asked him why. "I firmly believe that coal mining is one of the last American industries that can't be shipped overseas. Coal not only is the backbone of Eastern Kentucky, it's vital to the future energy independence of our entire nation. Without native coal, Americans would have 50% less affordable electricity than we all now enjoy—and most take for granted. In my view, coal—and most especially KENTUCKY

coal—'pays the freight' so many other industries can prosper. And I have great respect for Kentucky's coal miners. They work 12-14-hour days, 5-6 days a week. They're proud of what they do, and they enjoy doing it. They're day-to-day heroes, but they're rarely, if ever, acknowledged as such."

Further insights from Patton: "No other industry in Appalachia or the state pays its workforce the same high wages or offers the same benefits as Kentucky coal. Without government help, our industry invests hundreds of millions of dollars in this region. I'd like folks to look at us this way, for a change: without Kentucky coal providing the nation's lowest cost electric power, Chevrolet's, Ford's, and Toyota's amazing vehicles would cost more to produce; UK would have to pay substantially more for its power while in quest of its Top 20 Research University status; tickets to Rupp Arena events would cost more because electricity to light the facility would be substantially more expensive...the list goes on and on. Bottom line—every one of Kentucky's businesses and each of our citizens would be adversely affected without the ultra-affordable electricity provided by Kentucky coal!"

When asked, "What can and should be done to help all Kentuckians better understand and appreciate its coal industry?" this impassioned response from Brian Patton: "Our 'signature' industry may be perceived to be horses, or cars, or bourbon, or something else—but we need to be positively and legitimately recognized as a coal state, too. Our state government needs to acknowledge that we're a key component in our

Commonwealth's economic future. Our state-wide media need to recognize the good our industry does: our reclamation of once rugged, uninhabitable land, making it available for homes, schools, recreational areas, or business development; our initiatives to bring elk and other wildlife back to the region; our contributions of millions of dollars to colleges, universities, and charities; coal's determination to help significantly raise the standards of living in coal mining areas of the state. We're as modern and as educated as many of Kentucky's other signature industries, but we're unilaterally unrecognized as such. And that needs to change—the sooner, the better!"

## Coal Facts

**17,190 miners earning an average \$47,000 per year.**

**124 million tons produced in 2005, selling for \$4.9 billion.**

**73% of Kentucky's coal is exported out of state, bringing \$3.5 billion into Kentucky. 85 cents on each dollar stays in Kentucky.**

**91% of Kentucky's electricity comes from coal.**

**Kentucky has one of the lowest electrical rates in the nation because of coal.**

**The Kentucky coal miner is safer from injuries than the average Kentucky worker.**

**Paid for by the Kentucky Foundation.**

For more information on Kentucky Coal visit [www.kentuckycoal.com](http://www.kentuckycoal.com)

**Dexter Brian Patton, III, P.E.**  
**Age: 40**  
**President, James River Coal Service Company**

### Information on Brian Patton:

#### Personal:

- Born in Pikeville, Kentucky; raised in Prestonsburg until Grade 5, when his family moved to Lexington
- Graduated from Henry Clay High School; 1990 University of Kentucky Mining Engineering Graduate
- Married to Kimberly (Offutt) Patton, a Realtor; daughter Savannah, age 11
- An avid downhill snow skier, hunter, and outdoorsman; Deacon at Calvary Baptist Church, Lexington

#### Professional:

- President of James River Coal Service Company, in charge of all Central Appalachian and surface mining operations; has held the positions of Mine Engineer, Chief Engineer and GM, VP of Operations and Engineering, and President over the course of his 17+ year career in coal—supervising both large deep and surface mines in Illinois and Eastern Kentucky



Never underestimate the power of coal.™