



Charles Michael (Mick) Lownds

2015 Medal of Merit Recipient

Charles Michael (Mick) Lownds was born in South Africa and earned his undergraduate degree from Rhodes University and a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from the University of Cape Town. He immigrated to the USA in 1988, becoming a citizen in 2001. Lownds has published many technical papers and has been awarded 12 U.S. patents. He was the recipient of the President's Award from the International Society of Explosives Engineers in 2000. Recently, he retired after 42 years in commercial explosives following tenure with Sasol as Explosives R&D Manager and at Orica as Manager in charge of the electronic detonator business. Lownds now owns Mick Lownds Consulting in Salt Lake City offering expertise and guidance in commercial explosives.

A pioneer in electronic detonator development, Lownds searched for ways to perfect precise timed detonators and spent years in blasting research, concentrating on explosive-rock interaction. This work has resulted in better contained blasts, where an undulating surface is now observed, rather than rock flying from the blast.

The early years of perfecting new detonator technology proved challenging for both the producer and the customers. Lownds chased problems to their cause. His openness with customers convinced many mine operators to overcome traditions and realize the benefits of precise blasts.

Over the years, Lownds has made significant advancement on electronic initiation systems. He is a much sought-after speaker and generously shares his knowledge at mining schools across the country. His determination on improving the safety, reliability and efficiency in large-scale blasting has earned him unparalleled kudos among explosives manufacturers and mining companies.