

BOC opens Australia's first Helium plant in Darwin

Darwin, 3 March 2010 – The BOC Darwin Helium Plant was declared open today by The Honourable Paul Henderson MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and The Honourable Martin Ferguson AM MP, Minister for Resources and Energy. The helium plant is the first of its kind in Australia. BOC is a member of The Linde Group which is a world leader in the production of helium.

The BOC plant has been built next to the Darwin LNG site that supplies the raw helium gas from a previously unused vent stream.

This is the first helium plant in the Southern Hemisphere and puts Darwin and Australia on the world map as a new source of this rare product, explained Colin Isaac, Managing Director, BOC South Pacific.

“The new plant will produce 150 million cubic feet of helium annually, enough to supply all of Australia's needs with additional capacity available for export to other world markets. Australia's helium requirements were previously met by importing product from overseas, typically from the USA and the Middle East,” said Mr Isaac.

“There is significant growth in demand for helium around the world, particularly for medical, industrial and electronic use. Helium has many applications and is used extensively in the medical, manufacturing, space and defence industries. Helium is colourless, non-flammable and chemically inert making it one of the most versatile industrial gases.”

Like the LNG plant, the Darwin Helium plant has boosted the local economy. Other benefits for the Territory include the potential for extra shipping through East Arm Port and the expansion of contracting services and supply businesses in the local area.

The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, The Hon Paul Henderson, said “The Darwin Helium Plant is part of the Northern Territory Government's push to diversify and strengthen the economy through local investment in long-term industries. With the opening of this plant we have further secured Darwin as an international gas hub entrenching our city as a gas manufacturing base.”

Today's opening of Australia's first ever helium production plant sees Australia self-sufficient in helium supply. “Australia continues to play an important role in providing our region and world markets with a secure, reliable supply of this rare commodity. Today's official opening of the helium plant confirms Darwin as an attractive place to invest and a world class gas province,” concluded the Chief Minister.

Uses for helium

- Liquid helium is the coldest known liquid, with a liquefaction temperature of -269 degrees centigrade. This makes it important to the operation of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners, used extensively in hospitals. The MRIs use liquid helium to cool the superconducting magnets thus making it possible to generate high resolution images of the human body;
- With its very high heat transfer efficiency, helium provides fast and controlled cooling in many industrial processes;
- It is used by deep sea divers, in an oxygen mixture, to avoid decompression problems
- Helium is lighter than air, making it popular for use in filling party balloons and blimps;
- It is also used extensively in the space and defence industries, for laser welding, leak detection and the production of semiconductors;
- Helium is used as an inert shielding gas in the arc welding process and as a carrier gas in gas chromatography.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

BOC web site www.boc.com.au

Department of Infrastructure, Planning & Environment (DIPE): www.nt.gov.au/dipe

BOC

BOC is a member of The Linde Group which supplies compressed and bulk gases, chemicals and equipment around the globe. The company develops safe, sustainable and innovative solutions for customers in many specialty sectors, heavy industry and medical environments.

For more than a century the company's gases and expertise have contributed to advances in industry and everyday life, including steelmaking, refining, chemical processing, environmental protection, wastewater treatment, welding and cutting, food processing and distribution, glass production, electronics and health care. For further information, see www.boc.com.au

The Linde Group

The Linde Group is a world leading gases and engineering company with almost 50,000 employees working in around 100 countries worldwide. In the 2008 financial year it achieved sales of EUR 12.7 billion. The strategy of The Linde Group is geared towards sustainable earnings-based growth and focuses on the expansion of its international business with forward-looking products and services.

Linde acts responsibly towards its shareholders, business partners, employees, society and the environment – in every one of its business areas, regions and locations across the globe. Linde is committed to technologies and products that unite the goals of customer value and sustainable development. For more information, see The Linde Group online at <http://www.linde.com>

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