

BLM NEWS



NEW MEXICO«OKLAHOMA«TEXAS«KANSAS

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SALE OF CRUDE HELIUM STARTS TODAY

Amarillo – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has opened its second sale of crude helium this year, with bids to be accepted until October 30.

The sale allows the BLM to continue implementing the terms of the Helium Privatization Act of 1996, which directed the agency to offer stored helium for sale from the government helium reserve starting no later than 2005 on a straight line basis until 2015.

This sale is offering 2.1 billion cubic feet of government-owned helium. Any company involved in the helium business as a consumer, distributor, refiner or extractor of helium is eligible to purchase helium under the sale's provisions. Sales of similar volumes of conservation (stored) helium will be available through 2015.

“The Bureau of Land Management is committed to working with the local community and private enterprise in a cooperative and collaborative manner,” says Tim Spisak, manager of the Bureau's Amarillo office. “This sale aids that effort by making stored helium available to anyone operating a helium plant in the U.S., or that is involved in the sale of helium in the U.S.”

The first sale of crude helium occurred in March. Completion of the new Crude Helium Enrichment Unit in March, which was designed and constructed in cooperation with the Cliffside Refiners, LP, just outside of Amarillo, will allow the BLM to produce private- and government-owned helium in the most efficient and effective manner.

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The enrichment unit is designed to economically recover stored crude helium and the surrounding natural gas. Conserved helium purchased by the United States Government has been stored underground since 1961 and is now being made available for sale.

Before the helium was stockpiled in the Cliffside Field, there were spot shortages of helium along with helium that was not being recovered and ultimately wasted. The Cliffside Gas Field holds not only natural gas with a relatively high helium concentration but also helium that was extracted during the past forty years to avoid loss and stored for use whenever demand exceeds supply from current helium-bearing natural gas production.

Helium is extracted from natural gas; all natural gas contains at least a trace of helium. When gas from these fields is used or extracted, helium is lost to the atmosphere if not separated.

Today, helium plays a prominent role in medical imaging, fiber optics/semiconductor manufacturing, laser welding, leak detection, superconductivity development, aerospace, defense, and energy programs.

All bidders interested in this sale must meet qualifications specified by the Bureau of Land Management. In addition, all bids must be received by Oct. 30. Call 806.356.1000 for more information.

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