

PRICE TRACEY  
Form 4  
February 24, 2005

**FORM 4**

**UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20549**

OMB APPROVAL

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Check this box if no longer subject to Section 16. Form 4 or Form 5 obligations may continue. See Instruction 1(b).

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES**

Filed pursuant to Section 16(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, Section 17(a) of the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935 or Section 30(h) of the Investment Company Act of 1940

(Print or Type Responses)

1. Name and Address of Reporting Person \*  
PRICE TRACEY

2. Issuer Name and Ticker or Trading Symbol  
HOUSTON EXPLORATION CO  
[THX]

5. Relationship of Reporting Person(s) to Issuer

(Check all applicable)

(Last) (First) (Middle)

3. Date of Earliest Transaction  
(Month/Day/Year)

\_\_\_\_ Director  
 Officer (give title below)  
\_\_\_\_ 10% Owner  
\_\_\_\_ Other (specify below)  
Sr VP - Land

THE HOUSTON EXPLORATION COMPANY, 1100 LOUISIANA ST., SUITE 2000

(Street)

4. If Amendment, Date Original Filed(Month/Day/Year)

6. Individual or Joint/Group Filing(Check Applicable Line)  
 Form filed by One Reporting Person  
\_\_\_\_ Form filed by More than One Reporting Person

HOUSTON, TX 77002-5215

(City) (State) (Zip)

**Table I - Non-Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned**

1. Title of Security (Instr. 3)	2. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year)	2A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year)	3. Transaction Code (Instr. 8)	4. Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed of (D) (Instr. 3, 4 and 5)	5. Amount of Securities Beneficially Owned Following Reported Transaction(s) (Instr. 3 and 4)	6. Ownership Form: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 4)	7. Nature of Ownership (Instr. 4)
			Code	V	Amount or Price		
common stock (\$0.01 par value)	02/22/2005	02/22/2005	S		7,500	D	\$ 57.5337 2,000 D
common stock (\$0.01 par value)	02/22/2005	02/22/2005	S		2,980	D	\$ 57.5337 2,000 D
common stock	02/24/2005	02/24/2005	S		2,220	D	\$ 57.5 2,000 D

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(\$0.01 par value)

common stock (\$0.01 par value)

02/24/2005 02/24/2005 S 8,000 D \$ 57.5 2,000 D

common stock (\$0.01 par value)

02/24/2005 02/24/2005 S 2,780 D \$ 57.5 2,000 D

Reminder: Report on a separate line for each class of securities beneficially owned directly or indirectly.

**Persons who respond to the collection of information contained in this form are not required to respond unless the form displays a currently valid OMB control number.**

SEC 1474 (9-02)

**Table II - Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned**  
(e.g., puts, calls, warrants, options, convertible securities)

1. Title of Derivative Security (Instr. 3)	2. Conversion or Exercise Price of Derivative Security	3. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year)	3A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year)	4. Transaction Code (Instr. 8)	5. Number of Derivative Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed of (D) (Instr. 3, 4, and 5)	6. Date Exercisable and Expiration Date (Month/Day/Year)	7. Title and Amount of Underlying Securities (Instr. 3 and 4)	Amount or Number of Shares
employee stock options (right to buy)	\$ 29.01	02/22/2005	02/22/2005	X	7,500	07/16/2002 <sup>(1)</sup> 07/16/2011 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	7,500
employee stock options (right to buy)	\$ 25.48	02/22/2005	02/22/2005	X	2,980	09/20/2002 <sup>(1)</sup> 09/20/2011 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	2,980
employee stock options (right to buy)	\$ 25.48	02/24/2005	02/24/2005	X	2,220	09/20/2002 <sup>(1)</sup> 09/20/2011 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	2,220

employee stock options (right to buy)	\$ 30.1	02/24/2005	02/24/2005	X	8,000	10/16/2003 <sup>(1)</sup>	10/16/2012 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	8,000
employee stock options (right to buy)	\$ 35.62	02/24/2005	02/24/2005	X	2,780	10/21/2004 <sup>(1)</sup>	10/21/2013 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	2,780

## Reporting Owners

Reporting Owner Name / Address	Relationships			
	Director	10% Owner	Officer	Other
PRICE TRACEY THE HOUSTON EXPLORATION COMPANY 1100 LOUISIANA ST., SUITE 2000 HOUSTON, TX 77002-5215			Sr VP - Land	

## Signatures

/s/ Tracy Price                      02/24/2005  
 \*\*Signature of                      Date  
 Reporting Person

## Explanation of Responses:

- \* If the form is filed by more than one reporting person, *see* Instruction 4(b)(v).
- \*\* Intentional misstatements or omissions of facts constitute Federal Criminal Violations. *See* 18 U.S.C. 1001 and 15 U.S.C. 78ff(a).
- (1) Employee stock options vest in five equal annual installments beginning on the first anniversary of the grant date and expire 10 years from the grant.

Note: File three copies of this Form, one of which must be manually signed. If space is insufficient, *see* Instruction 6 for procedure.  
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