Air Products' Patented On-Site Helium Recycle System Delivers High Recovery Rates and Purities for Global Fiber Optic Manufacturers

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ALLENTOWN, Pa., May 6, 2002 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. (NYSE: APD) has received a U.S. patent for its novel Helium Recovery and Recycle System designed to deliver steady-state helium recovery rates in excess of 90 percent and recovery purities in excess of 99.99 percent. The modular unit provides design and operational flexibility for fiber optic manufacturers who are looking to protect both the quality of their fiber and the operability of their fiber draw process.

In the fiber manufacturing process, helium is essential for cooling fiber as it is being pulled from a furnace and prior to applying protective coatings. Although manufacturing processes vary widely, a typical fiber optic production process uses large quantities of helium, making recovery and recycle an important element in the manufacturer's total cost stack. Conservation has become even more vital in recent months, with helium demand projected to exceed worldwide capacity by the end of 2002 and to remain in a deficit condition through early 2005.

Air Products' Helium Recovery and Recycle System is designed to operate at the customer's site -- rather than at a remote facility -- ensuring that the unique recovery and recycle needs inherent in each process are modeled in the actual on-site operating environment. The flexible unit can be connected to multiple draw towers, reducing the amount of hardware required in prime manufacturing space and showcasing the total cost of ownership benefits of a permanent recovery system. In addition, customers can opt to contrast the quality of the fiber both with and without a helium recovery process by running the unit in tandem with a draw tower without a helium recovery system. Depending on the overall customer requirements, the demonstration system can easily be adapted to support a permanent system installation.

"Our patented Helium Recovery and Recycle Systems provide fiber optics manufacturers with the ability to improve process efficiency and reduce their helium requirements in this time of tightening helium supply," said Joseph A. Schillinger, Helium Recovery offering manager for Air Products. "With steady- state recovery rates in excess of 90 percent and helium purity levels in excess of 99.99 percent, our modular units can deliver a truly economical solution -- something that is critical to our customers' ability to meet growing demand for Internet and other telecommunication access pathways."

As the leading producer and supplier of helium utilizing the most extensive network of helium production facilities globally, Air Products has become recognized as the expert in helium supply and recovery solutions. In fact, more than four decades ago, Air Products pioneered many of the helium extraction, production, distribution and storage technologies that are still in use today, including cryogenic equipment for most of the world's helium recovery plants. The company was also one of the first to explore fiber optic helium recovery, continually refining its technologies throughout the 1990s to provide enhanced reliability and operation.

Beyond fiber optics, many other industries rely on helium for its varied properties, from its super-cold temperature for superconductivity, to its unique combination of chemical inertness and molecular characteristics. Air Products has become the leader in helium supply and technology solutions for many of these other markets as well, including magnetic resonance imaging, lifting (balloons, blimps and research balloons), breathing atmospheres, metals processing, pressurizing/purging and leak detection.

***NOTE: This release may contain forward-looking statements. Actual results could vary materially, due to changes in current expectations.

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