

Hresko Joanne C  
 Form 3  
 December 01, 2004

**FORM 3 UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION**  
**Washington, D.C. 20549**

OMB APPROVAL  
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**INITIAL STATEMENT OF 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 *		2. Date of Event Requiring Statement	3. Issuer Name <b>and</b> Ticker or Trading Symbol	
Â Hresko Joanne C		(Month/Day/Year)	HOUSTON EXPLORATION CO [THX]	
(Last)	(First)	(Middle)	4. Relationship of Reporting Person(s) to Issuer	5. If Amendment, Date Original Filed(Month/Day/Year)
		11/22/2004		
THE HOUSTON EXPLORATION COMPANY,Â 1100 LOUISIANA STREET, SUITE 2000			(Check all applicable)	
(Street)			<input type="checkbox"/> Director	<input type="checkbox"/> 10% Owner
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Officer	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
			(give title below)	(specify below)
			VP & General Manager, Onshore	
				6. Individual or Joint/Group Filing(Check Applicable Line)
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Form filed by One Reporting Person
				<input type="checkbox"/> Form filed by More than One Reporting Person
HOUSTON,Â TXÂ 77002-5215				
(City)	(State)	(Zip)		

**Table I - Non-Derivative Securities Beneficially Owned**

1. Title of Security (Instr. 4)	2. Amount of Securities Beneficially Owned (Instr. 4)	3. Ownership Form: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 5)	4. Nature of Indirect Beneficial Ownership (Instr. 5)
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Reminder: Report on a separate line for each class of securities beneficially owned directly or indirectly. SEC 1473 (7-02)

**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.**

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

1. Title of Derivative Security (Instr. 4)	2. Date Exercisable and Expiration Date (Month/Day/Year)	3. Title and Amount of Securities Underlying Derivative Security (Instr. 4)	4. Conversion or Exercise Price of	5. Ownership Form of Derivative	6. Nature of Indirect Beneficial Ownership (Instr. 5)
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	Date Exercisable	Expiration Date	Title	Amount or Number of Shares	Derivative Security	Security: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 5)	
employee stock options (right to buy)	10/26/2004 <sup>(1)</sup>	10/26/2009 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	760	\$ 18.625	D	Â
employee stock options (right to buy)	01/25/2005 <sup>(1)</sup>	01/25/2044 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	1,951	\$ 36.875	D	Â
employee stock options (right to buy)	09/20/2005 <sup>(1)</sup>	09/20/2011 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	2,400	\$ 25.48	D	Â
employee stock options (right to buy)	10/16/2004 <sup>(1)</sup>	10/16/2012 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	4,800	\$ 30.1	D	Â
employee stock options (right to buy)	10/21/2004 <sup>(1)</sup>	10/21/2013 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	5,000	\$ 35.62	D	Â
employee stock options (right to buy)	10/22/2005 <sup>(1)</sup>	10/22/2014 <sup>(1)</sup>	common stock	3,750	\$ 59.16	D	Â

## Reporting Owners

Reporting Owner Name / Address	Relationships			
	Director	10% Owner	Officer	Other
Hresko Joanne C THE HOUSTON EXPLORATION COMPANY 1100 LOUISIANA STREET, SUITE 2000 HOUSTON, TX 77002-5215	Â	Â	Â VP & General Manager, Onshore	Â

## Signatures

/s/Joanne C  
Hresko

12/01/2004

    Signature of  
Reporting Person

Date

## Explanation of Responses:

- \* If the form is filed by more than one reporting person, *see* Instruction 5(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 date of grant and expire 10 years from the date of grant.

Note: File three copies of this Form, one of which must be manually signed. If space is insufficient, *See* Instruction 6 for procedure. Potential persons who are to respond to the collection of information contained in this form are not required to respond unless the form displays a currently valid OMB number.