

Paris, July 26, 2016

World premiere: Air Liquide operates the first pure helium storage facility

Air Liquide has just commissioned a large helium storage facility in Gronau-Epe in the North Rhine-Westphalia region, 120 km from Düsseldorf, Germany. This initiative will allow Air Liquide, leader of the helium worldwide market since the Airgas acquisition, to better answer its customers' needs for a reliable and predictable helium supply.

The key challenge in helium supply is to meet customer on-time requirements, independently of the reliability of production sources, by ensuring an **optimum transport lead-time** to customers, while avoiding losses due to helium warm-up which can occur during transport. Air Liquide's new storage solution addresses that challenge, by offering **its customers** a service which **secures their helium supply**.

This new helium storage facility is a **world premiere**. Pure helium is stored at 1,300 meters underground in significant volume, in a salt reservoir managed by Air Liquide, using natural brine to adjust the storage volume. The project has been timely executed, notably thanks to a close cooperation with the North Rhine - Westphalia Mining Authorities.

Air Liquide owns the right to use the cavity, operates the facility and is able to **store** in Gronau-Epe **more than one year of its helium sourcing**. Helium being an inert, non-inflammable gas present in very small quantity in the air, the **storage is safe and environmentally neutral**.

Air Liquide thus provides a **reliable and complete helium offer**, with strategic sources, global logistics and complete customer installations. Its helium logistics currently encompasses **one of the largest helium ISO container fleets**, each container transporting helium at -269°C - close to absolute zero - with **a fully digitalized piloting** by dedicated teams in the USA, Europe, Middle-East and Asia.

François Darchis, Senior Vice-President and member of the Air Liquide Group Executive Committee, supervising Innovation, said: ***“By leveraging its high technologies and its engineering capabilities, Air Liquide is providing its customers with a unique reliable helium supply chain, which takes into account their new usages. This initiative is an illustration of the Group's pioneering spirit and is fully part of our customer-centric transformation strategy.”***

Helium

Helium is a colorless, odorless, non-flammable, inert gas, present in the air in very small quantity, but in larger quantity in natural gas and CO₂ fields where it is mainly extracted from. Helium is used in numerous industrial sectors, including medical equipment (MRI), electronics, aerospace engineering, fiber optics, automobiles, metallurgy, airship lifting and breathing mixtures (deep diving, for example).

[Find out more about helium](#)

Air Liquide Maritime, part of **Global Markets & Technologies WBU**, develops gas usages by offshore oil and gas platforms, offshore wind turbines, and cryogenic transportation by sea of **high value-added molecules, such as helium**. Air Liquide is present along the entire supply chain, from extraction with the largest helium extraction unit in Qatar, to worldwide maritime transport and distribution. Its fleet of more than **300 containers** covering the entire world allows transporting effectively **high value-added molecules, such as helium** at temperatures, close to absolute zero. Its containers rely on Air Liquide's expertise in cryogenic and digital technologies and ensure a secure and reliable supply.

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The world leader in gases, technologies and services for Industry and Health, Air Liquide is present in 80 countries with approximately 68,000 employees and serves more than 3 million customers and patients*. Oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen are essential small molecules for life, matter and energy. They embody Air Liquide's scientific territory and have been at the core of the company's activities since its creation in 1902.

Air Liquide's ambition is to lead its industry, deliver long-term performance and contribute to sustainability. The company's customer-centric transformation strategy aims at profitable growth over the long term. It relies on operational excellence, selective investments, open innovation and a network organization implemented by the Group worldwide. Through the commitment and inventiveness of its people, Air Liquide leverages energy and environment transition, changes in healthcare and digitization, and delivers greater value to all its stakeholders.

Air Liquide's revenues amounted to €16.4 billion in 2015, and its solutions that protect life and the environment represented more than 40% of sales. On 23 May 2016, Air Liquide completed its acquisition of Airgas, which had revenues amounting to \$5.3 billion (around €4.8 billion) for the fiscal year ending 31 March 2016.

Air Liquide is listed on the Paris Euronext stock exchange (compartment A) and belongs to the CAC 40 and Dow Jones Euro Stoxx 50 indexes.

* Following the acquisition of Airgas on 23 May 2016