

HOUSTON EXPLORATION CO  
 Form 3  
 April 13, 2005

**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 * Â Sherrick Jeffrey B (Last) (First) (Middle)	2. Date of Event Requiring Statement (Month/Day/Year) 04/11/2005	3. Issuer Name and Ticker or Trading Symbol HOUSTON EXPLORATION CO [THX]	4. Relationship of Reporting Person(s) to Issuer  (Check all applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Director <input type="checkbox"/> 10% Owner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Officer <input type="checkbox"/> Other (give title below) (specify below) Sr. V.P. Corporate Development	5. If Amendment, Date Original Filed(Month/Day/Year)
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THE HOUSTON  
 EXPLORATION  
 COMPANY,Â 1100  
 LOUISIANA ST., SUITE 2000  
 (Street)

HOUSTON,Â TXÂ 77002

(City) (State) (Zip)

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

**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)
common stock (\$0.01 par value) <sup>(1)</sup>	7,500	D	Â
common stock (\$0.01 par value)	2,000	D	Â

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)**

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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 Derivative Security	5. Ownership Form of Derivative Security: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 5)	6. Nature of Indirect Beneficial Ownership (Instr. 5)		
	Date Exercisable	Expiration Date	Title	Amount or Number of Shares			
employee stock option (right to buy)	04/11/2006 <sup>(2)</sup>	04/11/2015 <sup>(2)</sup>	common stock	20,000	\$ 55.09	D	Â

## Reporting Owners

Reporting Owner Name / Address	Relationships			
	Director	10% Owner	Officer	Other
Sherrick Jeffrey B THE HOUSTON EXPLORATION COMPANY 1100 LOUISIANA ST., SUITE 2000 HOUSTON, TX 77002	Â	Â	Â Sr. V.P. Corporate Development	Â

## Signatures

/s/ Jeffrey B. Sherrick  
04/13/2005

\*\*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) Restricted shares were granted on April 11, 2005 pursuant to the Company's 2004 Long-Term Incentive Plan, which are subject to transfer restrictions that generally expire on April 11, 2010 as set forth in the award agreement.
  - (2) 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.