

BOC Group News Release

14 November 2001

Summary of The BOC Group results for the year to 30 September 2001

Including exceptional items, operating profit was £512.1 million, profit before tax was £392.3 million and earnings per share were 51.8p. The profit and EPS shown below exclude exceptional items and comparisons are on a constant currency basis.

Turnover	£4159.2 million for the year, up 7 per cent £1016.2 million for the fourth quarter, down 2 per cent
Operating profit	£603.7 million for the year, up 8 per cent £144.7 million for the fourth quarter, down 5 per cent
Profit before tax	£480.3 million for the year, up 8 per cent £117.1 million for the fourth quarter, down 1 per cent
Earnings per share	67.0p for the year, up 6 per cent 17.4p for the fourth quarter, up 2 per cent

- Resilient performance in difficult market conditions.
- Process Gas Solutions (bulk and tonnage gases) annual operating profit was significantly better, largely as a result of revenues from new plants, but the pace slowed in the fourth quarter, reflecting weaker conditions in manufacturing industry, particularly in the US.
- Vigorous cost reduction, some improvement in market conditions in Australia, and better prices in South Africa led to a further profit increase from Industrial and Special Products in the fourth quarter and a small improvement for the year following a difficult first half.
- Cost reduction measures within BOC Edwards were successful in limiting the impact of the predicted decline in semiconductor orders. Following a strong first half year, this led to an operating profit of £6 million in the fourth quarter and an increase for the year as a whole.
- Both Afrox hospitals and Gist (distribution services) increased sales and operating profit in the fourth quarter and for the year.
- Operating cash flow was a record £292.9 million in the fourth quarter before exceptional items. Building on improvements in the previous quarters, this was an increase of over 19 per cent for the year.
- Better cash flow and lower interest rates reduced the interest charge in the fourth quarter.