



## **Blackstone's \$1B Celanese IPO kicks off '05**

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NEW YORK (CBS.MW) -The Blackstone Group kicks off the 2005 season for initial public offerings in coming days with a \$1 billion deal from chemical firm Celanese, one of many IPOs expected from private equity firms this year.

Celanese is by far the richest of a trio of IPOs due out in coming days as the year's first batch of baby stocks hits the market.

A \$75 million IPO from SeaBright Insurance and a \$60 million IPO from stem cell researcher ViaCell are also on deck.

IPO investors are expected to continue to embrace stock offerings from private equity firms, which have been nurturing a crop of established businesses to take public.

**Howard Ross, a partner in private equity firm LLR Equity Partners, predicts a stronger year in 2005 for private equity-backed IPOs, as part of a seven-year trend that saw private equity firms draw billions of dollars in investment.**

**"Now that the IPO window is opening wider, we've got them waiting," Ross said. "Some good bets are ripening and ready to go."**

**Along with Apollo Group and Carlyle Group, the Blackstone Group holds a prominent position in the private equity industry, he said.**

The New York-based firm bills itself as the world's largest alternative asset manager with approximately \$32 billion of capital raised since its inception 19 years ago.

Blackstone held a 42 percent stake in Foundation Coal (FCL), which went public on Dec. 9. In November, Blackstone played a role in the \$670 million IPO of Nalco Holdings (NLC), a former unit of Suez (SZE).

### **Celanese to raise \$1 billion**

Celanese plans to offer 50 million shares at \$19 to \$21 each in a bid to raise about \$1 billion via underwriters Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers.

The company plans to trade on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol "CE."

Celanese, a maker of industrial chemicals, reported sales of \$2.5 billion and operating profit of \$50 million for the six months ended Sept. 30.

Blackstone issued plans in December 2003 to buy the firm for about \$3.8 billion. Celanese AG of Germany traded U.S.-listed shares under the ticker CZ.

Celanese is going public amid an expected upswing in the chemical business this year, according to industry observers.