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SPE® NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR INNOVATION AWARDS COMPETITION, ADDS NEW SAFETY CATEGORY

Highly Coveted Awards Recognition Event Expands to Honor Plastics Contributions to Passive & Active Automotive Safety Applications

TROY (DETROIT), MICH. – The SPE® Automotive Division is now accepting nominations for its *Innovation Awards* parts competition, the largest, and one of the oldest and most prestigious recognition events for both the automotive and plastics industries. Nomination forms can be downloaded in Microsoft Excel® XLS format from the organization's website at <http://www.speautomotive.com/inno.htm> and are due no later than September 16th, with first-round judging to follow on September 28th. In addition, SPE has added a new *Safety Category* this year.

“Today's automotive market is demanding higher and higher levels of active as well as passive safety devices on passenger vehicles,” said Suzanne Cole, president of Cole and Associates and the 2005 program chair, “And polymeric materials are often the critical factor in making these technologies work. To ensure our *Innovation Awards* program accurately reflects market trends, we decided to add the new *Safety Category* to the 2005 program, just as we added the *Performance/Customization* (Automotive Aftermarket) Category last year.”

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Nomination Forms Now Available for Innovation Awards Competition, New Safety Category Added
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A few examples of new active safety devices – designed to prevent accidents from happening, rather than just to protect occupants as accidents occur – include:

- *Collision Warning Systems,*
- *Driver Drowsiness Detection & Avoidance,*
- *Lateral & Longitudinal Lane Change Alerts,*
- *Rear-End Collision and Intrusion Protection Systems, and*
- *Swerving Detection Devices.*

SPE's *Innovation Awards Gala* is the largest competition of its kind in the world. Dozens of teams made up of OEMs, tier suppliers, and polymer producers submit nominations describing the unique contributions of their part, system, or complete vehicle module and why it merits the claim as *Year's Most Innovative Use of Plastics*. This year's competition will feature awards for best innovation in the:

- *Assembly/Enabling Technologies,*
- *Body Exterior,*
- *Body Interior,*
- *Chassis/Hardware,*
- *Environmental,*
- *Materials,*
- *Performance/Customization (Automotive Aftermarket),*
- *Processing*
- *Powertrain,*
- Plus a new *Safety* category.

An additional *Hall of Fame* category is awarded to parts that have been in continuous commercial production for 15 or more years.

It is typically design-driven innovations that lead to winning entries in the *Interior, Exterior, Chassis/Hardware,* and *Powertrain* Categories. Hence the focus is on how unique the application is and how it advances the vehicle in terms of performance, mass, cost, aesthetics, and other attributes. Here, process and materials breakthroughs may have helped make the application possible, but have secondary importance.

Focus in the *Materials* Category is typically on how innovative the polymeric material(s) used in the application is (are) in terms of chemistry and properties.

The *Processing* Category focuses on manufacturing innovation via processing of polymeric parts, whereas the *Assembly/Enabling Technologies* Category focuses on other technologies that support the product development effort, such as computer-aided engineering, rapid prototyping, secondary-finishing, and assembly/attachment methods.

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Nomination Forms Now Available for Innovation Awards Competition, New Safety Category Added
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Long-term sustainability of polymeric materials and components are the features judges look for in the *Environmental Category*. Applications may make use of post-industrial and/or post-consumer recycle, or be specifically designed for easy disassembly and recycling at end-of-vehicle life.

New in 2004, the *Performance and Customization Category* awards creativity and innovation in plastics used to personalize and customize vehicles in the automotive aftermarket.

The new *Safety Category* added for 2005 seeks plastics innovations that enhance active and passive safety devices on vehicles.

The *Hall of Fame Award* is presented for an innovative application that has stood the test of time and been in continuous production for at least a decade-and-a-half.

Nominations may be submitted by anyone familiar with the application and its technical significance – from OEM, Tier supplier, toolmaker, or materials supplier. However, OEM approval is required for the nomination to be considered by the judges.

The component must not have previously been nominated for the *Innovation Awards* competition. Additionally, it must be in production and on a vehicle that is commercially available for consumer purchase by November 1 of the year in which it is nominated. There are no minimum limits to the vehicle's production run. If the submission team is not sure if the application has previously been nominated, it should be submitted anyway as the screening judges will do the research necessary to make that determination.

Often an application could be submitted in multiple categories – for example, a redesigned air-filter housing that represents new materials and processing technologies, plus is mounted underhood (a fit for the chassis/hardware category) and has environmental benefits. By carefully answering the questions on the nomination form, the single most innovative aspect of the application may become apparent. The screening judges will carefully review the nomination form. If they feel the application will fit better and have a better chance of winning in another category, they may move it.

The competition culminates in the *SPE Innovation Awards Gala* and offers many benefits for participants. First, the nomination and judging processes drive competitive excellence and rewards innovative thinking and teamwork, advancing plastics technology and usage in the automotive industry. Second, winning entries provide worldwide exposure and recognition for both participating companies and their team members. Third, attendees learn about the latest and most innovative developments in automotive plastics, as the state-of-the-art advances.

Now in its 35th-anniversary year, the *Innovation Awards Gala* is unofficially known as the “*Academy Awards*® of the *Plastics Industry*” and is the largest, and one of the oldest and most prestigious recognition events for both the automotive and plastics industries. This year's program – whose theme “*License to Thrill*” take cues from the long-running James Bond® books and movies – will take place on November 16th at the Burton Manor in Livonia, Mich.

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Nomination Forms Now Available for Innovation Awards Competition, New Safety Category Added
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The SPE Automotive Division's *Innovation Awards Gala* honors the "*Most Innovative Use of Plastics*" in automotive applications and recognizes outstanding leadership among automotive industry executives. This annual event typically draws over 700 OEM engineers, automotive and plastics industry executives, and media.

As is customary, funds raised from this event will be used to support SPE educational efforts and technical seminars, which help to secure the role of plastics in the advancement of the automobile.

The mission of SPE International is to promote scientific and engineering knowledge relating to plastics worldwide and to educate industry, academia, and the public about these advances. SPE's Automotive Division is active in educating, promoting, recognizing, and communicating technical accomplishments for all phases of plastics and plastic based-composite developments in the global transportation industry. Topic areas include applications, materials, processing, equipment, tooling, design, and development.

For more information about the SPE *Innovation Awards Gala*, please visit the SPE Automotive Division's website at www.speautomotive.com, or contact the group at +1.248.244.8993, or write SPE Automotive Division, 1800 Crooks Road, Suite A, Troy, MI 48084, USA.

For more information on the Society of Plastics Engineers International or other SPE events, please visit the SPE website at www.4spe.org, or call +1.203.775.0471.

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