



FORD KEYNOTES AT SPE AUTO TPO CONFERENCE DESCRIBES AUTOMAKER'S VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE AUTO INDUSTRY

This year's **SPE® Automotive TPO Global Conference, October 3-6, 2010**, will feature an opening morning keynote on October 4 by Deborah Mielewski, Ph.D., technical leader-Plastics Research at Ford Motor Co. (Dearborn, Mich.), who will give a talk entitled: *"Greening the Blue Oval: Ford's Vision for a Sustainable Automotive Industry."* Mielewski says she will discuss Ford's initiatives in developing a global sustainability vision for itself, including processes that help engineers determine the best solutions to meet all durability and functional requirements, while also considering the environmental impact of materials they use in vehicles. She will also discuss the company's leadership in the area of biomaterials – the successes they have had thus



far and the challenges that still must be overcome – as well as new efforts to deal with some old problems around recycling materials into high-value car parts.

"Ford's plastics group has focused on developing biomaterials for almost a decade – long before it was fashionable to be 'green,'" she says. "These technologies have had a positive impact on the environment by using renewable, carbon-sequestering inputs that lower CO₂ emissions

and, in some cases, also reduce weight (for better fuel economy) and are entirely compostable. As the price of oil continues to fluctuate, more companies will begin to invest in both biomaterials and plastics recycling, leading to more breakthroughs. In turn, this will allow our industry to reap not only environmental benefits, but also cost savings, expanded material choices, and functional improvements."

Mielewski has spent the past 24 years working for the automaker in a variety of positions ranging from automotive paints, to polymer processing, to materials development. She started a biomaterials program at Ford Research in 2001, and her team demonstrated soy-based foam on a concept vehicle at the January 2003 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit. The technology was launched on seating for the 2008MY *Mustang* sports car and has since proliferated to 23 other models. Mielewski group continues to pioneer developments in sustainable materials that meet stringent automotive requirements, including natural-fiber and soy-flour reinforcement for plastics, and compostable resins from renewable feedstocks. The group's newest initiative involves high-value recycling. Mielewski has over 30 refereed journal publications and is named to eight U.S. patents. She holds B.S.E. ('86), M.S.E. ('93), and Ph.D. ('98) degrees in Chemical Engineering from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. About the TPO Conference.

About the TPO Conference

Since 1998, the ***SPE Automotive TPO Global Conference*** has highlighted the importance of rigid and flexible polyolefins throughout the automobile – in applications ranging from semi-structural composite underbody shields and front-end modules to soft-touch interior skins and bumper fascia. Polyolefins have been the fastest-growing segment of the global plastics industry for a decade owing to their excellent cost / performance ratio. The polyolefin supply chain has experienced major changes in recent years, which are providing both challenges and opportunities for OEMs and the entire supply community. Three special sessions have been developed for this year's conference to help processors and end users learn about the latest technologies available from the rapidly changing world of automotive olefins. These include: *Thermoforming* (returning for the first time since 2008), and completely new sessions on *Polypropylene Compounding* and *Olefin-Based Thermoplastic Elastomers & Vulcanizates (TPEs & TPVs)*.

The ***SPE Automotive TPO Global Conference*** is organized each year by a volunteer committee. The conference typically draws over 400 attendees from 20 countries on 4 continents. Roughly 35% of conference attendees work for an automotive OEM, with the balance made up of tier integrators and molders, resin suppliers, equipment OEMs, industry consultants, and members of academia. The event is held annually at the Best Western Sterling Inn (www.sterlinginn.com) in Sterling Heights, Mich.

For more information about the ***SPE Automotive TPO Global Conference***, to view the conference's program, or to register to attend the event, please visit <http://auto-tpo.com/> or www.speautomotive.com/tpo.htm , or contact the group at +1.248.244.8993, or write SPE Detroit Section, 1800 Crooks Road, Suite A, Troy, MI 48084, USA.

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