



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 23 October 2016**

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## **FIRST POLYCARBONATE INSTRUMENT PANEL WINS 2016 SPE<sup>®</sup> AUTO INNOVATION AWARDS COMPETITION HALL OF FAME**

**TROY, (DETROIT) MICH.** – The first use of polycarbonate (PC) to injection mold a hard (painted) instrument panel (IP), featured on the 1977 *Econoline*<sup>®</sup> van from Ford Motor Co., has been named the 2016 *Hall of Fame* winner by the ***Automotive Division of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE<sup>®</sup>)*** for the group's 46th-annual ***Automotive Innovation Awards Competition & Gala***.

To be considered for a *Hall of Fame* award, an automotive plastic or composite component must have been in continuous service in some form for at least 15 years and preferably have been broadly adopted within the automotive or ground-transportation industries. This application certainly qualifies, as PC and PC blends have been used to injection mold IP retainers, uppers, upper trim, lowers, and lower trim for both hard (painted) and soft (skin & foam) IP systems for the last 39 years. The application has proliferated from its first use on commercial vans to high-volume full-size pickups and a number of passenger cars and sport-utility vehicles (SUVs). To date an estimated 200-million IPs using 2-billion pounds/907,185 tonnes of PC or PC blends have been produced globally in the passenger vehicle market. Several IP design variants have been category or *Grand Award* winners in past ***SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Competitions***.

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*First PC IP Named 2016 SPE Auto. Innovation Awards Competition Hall of Fame Winner  
2-2-2-2*

Interestingly, the original PC IP was molded in a tool that already had been cut for and was running acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) resin. Ford's then Saline plant<sup>1</sup>, which molded and assembled the IP for the *Econoline* van was able to make a running change because both resins had similar shrinkage values in the tool. Following the first use on commercial vans, other notable vehicles that highlight the spread of the technology across the industry include:

- In 1978, *Ford Thunderbird* and *Mercury Cougar* sedans (both from Ford) converted to PC IPs.
- In 1994, PC IPs debuted on the first cars from then Chrysler Corp. with the *Dodge Neon* compact car, which initially used PC and later PC/ABS.
- In 1996, the *Cadillac Eldorado* luxury sedan from then General Motors Corp. (GM) featured a glass-reinforced PC IP plus a styrene maleic anhydride (SMA) retainer.
- By 1997, *Jeep Wrangler* and *Jeep Cherokee* SUVs from Chrysler converted to PC/ABS IP.
- By 1998, when Chrysler merged with Daimler AG to form DaimlerChrysler, both the *Chrysler Concorde* and *Dodge Intrepid* full-size cars were using PC IPs with retainers in modified-polyphenylene ether (MPPE). That same year the *Dodge Ram* pickup sported the first PC/ABS IPs.
- By 1999, Mitsubishi Motor Corp. used PC/ABS IPs on the company's *Mitsubishi Galant* sedans.
- In 2000, PC blends debuted on *Buick LeSabre* and *Pontiac Bonneville* lower retainers from GM. Impact-modified PC also debuted that year on active uppers on the *Bonneville* and *Chevrolet Impala* sedans.
- By 2004, the first integrally molded hidden airbag door chute and cover in PC/ABS were used on *Chevrolet Malibu* and *Pontiac G6* sedans from GM.
- PC and PC blend IPs became the default materials for IPs for high-volume full-size pickups produced by the Detroit "Big 3." GM's *Silverado* pickups used PC and PC/ABS IPs between 1999 and 2006, and at peak production, 900,000 vehicles/year were sporting the technology. A similar story occurred with Ford's *F-150* pickups, which used PC/ABS IPs between 1997 and 2004 and also had production volumes of 900,000/year at peak production. Another strong contender was the *Dodge Ram* pickup from Chrysler and later DaimlerChrysler, which used PC/ABS IP technology between 1994 and 2008 and had peak production volumes of 450,000 units/year.

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<sup>1</sup> The plant was later owned by Visteon Corp., Ford Motor Co., ACH Holdings LLC, and currently is owned by Faurecia.

*First PC IP Named 2016 SPE Auto. Innovation Awards Competition Hall of Fame Winner  
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On **Wednesday, November 9, 2016**, Desi Ujkashevic, global director, Interior Engineering at Ford Motor Co. will accept the award on behalf of the original team that worked on the first PC IP on the *Econoline* van program at the 46th-annual ***SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Gala*** at Burton Manor ([www.burtonmanor.net](http://www.burtonmanor.net)) in Livonia, Mich., where winning part nominations and the teams that developed them will be honored during an evening celebrating automotive plastics innovation. Additionally, representatives from material supplier, SABIC (formerly GE Plastics) and the Saline plant where the first PC IP was produced and assembled by Ford also will be honored at the event.

***SPE's Automotive Innovation Awards Program*** is the oldest and largest competition of its kind in the automotive and plastics industries. Dozens of teams made up of OEMs, tier suppliers, and polymer producers submit nominations describing their part, system, or complete vehicle and why it merits the claim as the *Year's Most Innovative Use of Plastics*. This annual event typically draws over 700 OEM engineers, automotive and plastics industry executives, and media. As is customary, funds raised from this event are used to support SPE educational efforts and technical seminars, which help educate and secure the role of plastics in the advancement of the automobile.

The mission of SPE 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 in 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 Automotive Innovation Awards Competition and Gala*** see <http://speautomotive.com/inno> and <http://speautomotive.com/awa>. For more information on the ***Society of Plastics Engineers***, see [www.4spe.org](http://www.4spe.org).

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*Attn. Editors: A large collection of SPE Automotive Division digital photography is available for download at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/speautomotive/collections>. Photos of all of the parts nominated for this year's SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Competition (including these finalists) sorted by category will be found here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/speautomotive/collections/72157673849255370/>.*

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