



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 2 March 2026

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SPE® AUTOMOTIVE ANNOUNCES “CALL FOR NOMINATIONS” FOR 55th ANNUAL INNOVATION AWARDS COMPETITION & GALA – “PLASTICS: THE ROAD TO INNOVATION!” (Nov. 4, 2026)

- **Most Innovative Use of Plastics Award Nominations (due September 12, 2026)**
- **Hall of Fame Award Nominations (due May 31, 2026)**

TROY, (DETROIT) MICH. – The Automotive Division of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE®) is announcing a “Call for Nominations” for its 55th annual Automotive Innovation Awards Gala, the oldest and largest recognition event (established in 1970) in the automotive and plastics industries. This year’s Awards Gala will be held Wednesday, November 4, 2026 at the Laurel Manor in Livonia, Mich. Winning part nominations (due by September 12, 2026) in 10 different categories, and the teams that developed them, will be honored with a “Most Innovative Use of Plastics” award. Categories include: Aftermarket & Limited Edition/Specialty Vehicles, Body Exterior, Body Interior, Chassis/Hardware, Electric and Autonomous Vehicle Systems, Sustainability, Materials, Powertrain, Process/Assembly/Enabling Technologies, and Safety. A “Grand Award” will be presented to the winning team from all category award winners.

An application that has been in continuous use for 15 years or more, and has made a significant and lasting contribution to the application of plastics in automotive vehicles, (nominations due by May 31, 2026) will be honored with a “Hall of Fame” award. Additional criteria for a HOF award is that the nomination be: game changing; very successful worldwide; innovative in materials, process and application; and still being used. The HOF committee consists of engineers, managers, executives, technical experts, SPE Fellows, SPE Honored Service Members and automotive industry technical experts having served at least 30 plus years in the industry.

Nominations must be submitted online via:

<https://speautomotive.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-SPE-Innovation-Awards-Program-Part-Nomination-Form-V1.pdf>

“Plastics continue to fuel innovation across the automotive industry, enabling advancements in electric, autonomous, and next-generation mobility solutions,” said Jeffrey Helms, global

automotive director at Celanese Corp. and returning 2026 SPE Automotive Innovation Awards chair. “With this year’s theme, ‘Plastics: The Road to Innovation!’, we highlight the critical role plastics play in driving progress—from design and performance to sustainability and advanced manufacturing. We look forward to celebrating another year of breakthrough achievements and honoring the technologies shaping the future of automotive plastics.”

Since 1970, the SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Competition has highlighted the positive changes that polymeric materials have brought to automotive and ground-transportation industries, such as weight and cost reduction, parts consolidation, increased safety, and enhanced aesthetics and design freedom. At the time the competition started, in 1970, many OEM designers and engineers thought of plastics as inexpensive replacements for more “traditional” materials. To help communicate that plastics were capable of far more functionality than their typical use as decorative knobs and ashtrays indicated, members of the board of directors of SPE’s Automotive Division created the competition to recognize successful and innovative plastics applications and to communicate their benefits to OEMs, media, and the public.

Over the years, the competition drew attention to plastics as an underutilized design tool and made industry aware of more progressive ways of designing, engineering, and manufacturing automotive components. From its humble beginnings, the competition has grown to be one of the most fiercely contested recognition events in the automotive and plastics industries. Today, polymeric materials are no longer substitutes for more expensive materials, but rather are the materials of choice in hundreds of different applications throughout the vehicle. Without plastics, many of the auto industry’s most common comfort, control, and safety applications would not be possible.

During the competition phase of the event, dozens of teams made up of OEMs and suppliers work for months to hone submission forms and presentations describing their part, system, or complete vehicle module to support claims that it is the year’s “Most Innovative Use of Plastics.” To win, teams must survive a pre-competition review and two rounds of presentations before industry and media judges.

There is no cost to nominate parts, however, nominations that are accepted into the competition need to be presented (in person or via webinar) by their nominating teams to the SPE Automotive Div. Board of Directors during the first round of Automotive Innovation Awards Competition judging, September 24 - 25, 2026 at Celanese Corp. in Auburn Hills, Michigan. Finalists from that round advance to a second presentation before a panel of Blue Ribbon judges made up of media, retired chief engineers, and other industry experts on October 2, 2026 (also at Celanese Corp. in Auburn Hills, Mich.) Winners of each category, the Grand Award, Hall of Fame, and Lifetime Achievement winner will all be honored during the Automotive Innovation Awards Gala on November 4, 2026. This annual event typically draws over 500 OEM engineers, automotive and plastics industry executives, and media. Funds raised from the event are used to support SPE educational programs including technical seminars and conferences, which help educate and secure the role of plastics in the advancement of the automobile. For more info go to:

<https://speautomotive.com/spe-automotive-div-innovation-awards/>.

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 Div., see <https://speautomotive.com/>. For more information on the Society of Plastics Engineers, see www.spe.org



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This year’s Awards Gala will be held Wednesday, November 4, 2026 at the Laurel Manor in Livonia, Mich. Winning part nominations (due by September 12, 2026) in 10 different categories, and the teams that developed them, will be honored during an evening that celebrates automotive plastics innovation. Categories include: Aftermarket & Limited Edition/Specialty Vehicles, Body Exterior, Body Interior, Chassis/Hardware, Electric and Autonomous Vehicle Systems, Sustainability, Materials, Powertrain, Process/Assembly/Enabling Technologies, and Safety.

A “Grand Award” will be presented to the winning team for the most innovative application from all category award winners. An application that has been in continuous use for 15 years or more, and has made a significant and lasting contribution to the application of plastics in automotive vehicles, (nominations due by May 31, 2026) will be honored with a “Hall of Fame” award. Additional criteria for a HOF award is that the nomination be: game changing; very successful worldwide; innovative in materials, process and application; and still being used.

Shown above are members of the team that developed the 2025 Grand Award and Body Exterior Category Winner -

Multi-Flex Mid-Gate on the 2024MY General Motors Co. Chevrolet Silverado & GMC Sierra EV

- System Supplier: Flex-N-Gate LLC
- Material Processor: Molded Fiber Glass Companies (MFG)
- Material Supplier: CSP
- Resin: 834UV SMC
- Tooling Supplier: Flex-N-Gate LLC
- Process: Compression Molding

For more information:

<https://speautomotive.com/spe-automotive-div-innovation-awards/>

Attn: Editors: A large collection of SPE Automotive Division photography is available for download at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/speautomotive/albums/>

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