

Welcome

Welcome to the 9th-Annual *Automotive Composites Conference and Exhibition* (ACCE). Since it was first organized in 2001, the ACCE has earned its position as the *World's Leading Automotive Composites Forum*, attracting presenters, exhibitors, and attendees year after year from Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and the Americas. No other conference provides topics more relevant to composites for the automotive industry than the one you will witness over the next two days. This year's theme, "*Plug In To Composites*," highlights the special progress and promise of composite materials for enabling the performance of electric and hybrid electric vehicles. Lighter weight and better fuel efficiency have always been key benefits of composites. With electrics and hybrids, weight reduction is not simply a "bonus" to the OEM's design. It has become critical to extending vehicle driving range. Our conference speakers will be sharing the latest in what's practical and what's possible with the use of composites.

Each year, the ACCE planning committee aims to improve the conference based on your feedback. You will find that we have continued with the most important of these including:

- ~ Almost 60 peer reviewed technical papers plus keynote presentations from industry leaders,
- ~ Our always-lively panel discussion on the future of automotive composites,
- ~ Our conference *Best Paper* awards,
- ~ Two *Graduate Student Scholarships* to support research in the area of transportation composites,
- ~ A single large display room for our exhibitors and sponsors, plus a lobby full of exciting vehicles and large composite applications,
- ~ Our annual cocktail reception generously sponsored by Quadrant Plastic Composites,
- ~ And plenty of time to network with customers, suppliers, and colleagues from around the world.

New to this year's conference, we have added student technical posters from schools around the U.S., a job resources fair for job-seeking SPE members, and we will be webcasting a portion of Tuesday's keynote addresses to reach audiences unable to physically attend the conference. If successful, we will consider offering this "*virtual*" option to attendees in 2010.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the crisis suffered by our industry over the past year. Hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs, auto sales have suffered record losses in every geography, pillars of the American automotive industry, General Motors and Chrysler, entered and left bankruptcy, historic vehicle brands have been killed off, and well-known suppliers have either been liquidated or acquired by new owners. If this tumultuous experience has taught us nothing else, it has shown how truly global and interconnected our industry has become. Notwithstanding, this crisis has presented our industry with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reinvent itself and truly provide quality, sustainable products that our customers want. All vehicles can benefit from greater use of composites. Perhaps the ability to start with a clean slate finally provides the opening composites have needed to be granted their logical place as viable automotive materials/process options.

I would like to personally thank each committee member for his / her contributions. The ACCE is the result of a year-round effort by members of the SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions. Many of these team members have been committed for a number of years. The conference would not be what it is today without their support, or the support of our authors, presenters, keynote speakers, sponsors, and attendees.

Please contact any of our committee members if you have questions, need assistance, or to offer feedback to help us make this and future events even better. Enjoy the conference!

Sincerely,



Cedric Ball
2009 SPE Automotive Composites Conference Chair
Ashland, Inc.

