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**SPE<sup>®</sup> ANNOUNCES FINALISTS FOR 2008 AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION AWARDS COMPETITION**

**TROY, (DETROIT) MICH.** – The 38<sup>th</sup>-annual **SPE<sup>®</sup> Automotive Innovation Awards Competition** – the oldest and largest recognition event in the automotive and plastics industries – is well underway. After a pre-qualification round, surviving nominating teams presented their applications before a panel of automotive and plastics industry members during a two-day judging on Oct. 8 and 9. From there, finalists will advance to the next round and will present before the Blue Ribbon Judging panel on Oct. 15, at which time category and the Grand Award winners will be selected for 2008. These will be announced during SPE's annual **Automotive Innovation Awards Gala** on Nov. 20, a night dedicated to celebrating innovation in automotive plastics and the hardworking teams of automakers and suppliers who make such innovation possible.

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According to Automotive Innovation Awards program chair, Maria Ciliberti of Ticona, “This year’s pool of nominations was especially creative in terms of both design and the use of plastic materials, so the judges sent a larger-than-usual number of finalists forward to the next round of judging. The Blue Ribbon Judges had their work cut out for them trying to select just one winner each category.” The finalists selected from this year’s pool of nominations were as follows:

**CATEGORY: Body Exterior**

● **ACRYLIC APPLIQUÉS WITH SECURECODE™ INVISIBLE KEYPAD**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford® Flex® CUV
- **Tier Supplier:** Windsor Mold
- **Material Supplier:** Arkema
- **Material:** Acrylic
- **Process:** Two-Shot Injection Molding
- **Description:** The high-gloss black acrylic pillar appliqué feature Ford's industry-first SecureCode™ invisible-touchpad keyless-entry system while facilitating the Flex CUV's signature *floating roof* design. First-surface dual-shot molding technology, highly polished precision tools, along with uniquely tuned acrylic materials are used to provide a mirror-like finish, and excellent dent, ding, and scratch resistance that is superior to metal appliqué.

● **PICKUP CARGO MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

- **OEM:** Chrysler LLC
- **Model:** Dodge® Ram® pickup
- **Tier Supplier:** ABC Group
- **Material Supplier:** ABC Group, Salflex Polymers Ltd., & Dow Automotive
- **Material:** Glass-reinforced polypropylene (PP) & Polycarbonate/Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (PC/ABS)
- **Process:** Blow Molding, Injection Molding
- **Description:** The RamBox™ is an all-plastic construction that provides customers with 7.4 ft<sup>3</sup>/0.21 m<sup>3</sup> of dry, lockable storage space within the sheet metal of the pickup box fender wells. The system also provides a multi-position, self-adjusting, dual-use bed extender/bed divider for increasing cargo space and securely partitioning cargo within the box. Core components are injection and blow-molded, with mold-in-color surface, and a body-color matching appliqué.

● **INTEGRATED ROCKER MOLDING / RUNNING BOARD SYSTEM**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford Escape® SUV
- **Tier Supplier:** ABC Group
- **Material Suppliers:** Salflex Polymers Ltd.
- **Material:** 30% glass-reinforced PP
- **Process:** Blow molding
- **Description:** For the first time, rocker moldings, end features, and running board/step area are combined in a single blow-molded component that is foam-sealed to the body side for improved craftsmanship, fit, and finish. The component also reduces weight (8.6 lb/3.9 kg), lowers piece-price and assembly costs (\$5 USD/vehicle), provides improved stone-chip resistance, and reduces assembly time.

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**CATEGORY: Body Interior**

- **INTEGRATED REFRIGERATOR / REAR-FLOOR CONSOLE**
  - **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Ford® Flex® CUV
  - **Tier Supplier:** Automotive Component Holdings
  - **Material Supplier:** Washington Penn
  - **Material:** Recycled 30% glass-reinforced PP
  - **Process:** Injection Molding
  - **Description:** An industry first, this unit combines a rear floor console with a compressor-driven refrigerator (whose cooling-time performance exceeds most home units). The molded-in-color refrigerator compartment assists with moisture management as well as cleanability, and a unique integral vent design supports thermal-management requirements while drawing only 4.5 amps of power with low noise output. Recycled, injection-molded glass-filled polypropylene is used to reduce cost, mass, and streamline assembly.
  
- **INTEGRATED FLOOR SHIFTER / FRONT CONSOLE**
  - **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Ford® Flex® CUV
  - **Tier Supplier:** Automotive Component Holdings
  - **Material Supplier:** Nova Chemical
  - **Material:** Recycled styrene maleic anhydride (SMA) & long-glass PP
  - **Process:** Injection Molding
  - **Description:** This modular floor console and shifter assembly uses an all plastic (recycled injection molded SMA) structure to support a floor-based shifter and eliminate use of metal bracketry previously used to secure the shifter to the vehicle floor pan. The integrated system simplifies online assembly and improves package space, thus improving stowage and craftsmanship. It also reduces cost (\$7 USD plus assembly labor) and weight (5 lb/2.3 kg) vs. earlier designs.
  
- **TPO FOR HARD SEAMLESS PASSENGER AIRBAG APPLICATIONS**
  - **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Ford® Focus® compact car
  - **Tier Supplier:** Automotive Component Holdings
  - **Material Supplier:** Advanced Composites
  - **Material:** TPO and TPE
  - **Process:** Injection Molding, Laser Scoring, Vibration Welding
  - **Description:** This seamless passenger airbag system for hard instrument panels (IPs) delivers superior low-temperature performance and improved aesthetics in a C-car package environment. A steel door is overmolded with TPE, then vibration welded to the B-surface of the IP. A TPO reaction ring incorporates demister duct geometry. The system is 5 lb/2.3 kg lighter and \$20-25 USD less costly than a comparable system for a soft IP.

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**CATEGORY: Body Interior (continued)**

● **INTEGRATED ROOF SHADE / AUXILLIARY AC DUCT / HEADLINER REINFORCEMENT**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford® Flex® CUV
- **Tier Supplier:** Dakkota Integrated Systems, LLC
- **Material Supplier:** Not Stated
- **Material:** High-heat ABS, Lofted GMT Composite
- **Process:** Injection Molding
- **Description:** This integrated headliner system arrives at the assembly plant already carrying an auxiliary air-conditioning (AC) duct, headliner stiffener, headliner attachment base, moon-roof opening stiffening rings, and dual sun-shade carrier, reducing online assembly operations and costs, lowering part count from 22 to 15, lightening the headliner by 1 lb/0.45 kg, and allowing for a larger daylight opening and better airflow management and distribution. By integrating the duct and shade system using high-heat ABS and a high-strength hot-melt adhesive with nitrogen-assist spray, the installation process can be better controlled to meet required tolerances, saving \$10-15 USD piece cost/vehicle and resulting in \$2.45MM in tooling avoidance.

● **OPEN-FACE FLOOR CONSOLE WITH FLEXIBLE STORAGE**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford® Escape® SUV
- **Tier Supplier:** Automotive Component Holdings
- **Material Supplier:** Advanced Composites & SABIC Innovative Plastics
- **Material:** PP and ABS
- **Process:** Not Stated
- **Description:** The efficient design of this open-face floor console with integrated reinforcement bin eliminates steel for weight and cost efficiencies and improved storage volume. The flexible patented storage system features: better access to the large storage area (it holds a laptop computer or a purse), better armrest accommodation and storage for rear occupants, and a pair of innovative removable hanging cupholder clips that latch onto the bin in front and back.

**CATEGORY: Chassis / Hardware / Powertrain**

● **OVERMOLDED, HYDROFORMED STRUCTURAL FRONT END MODULE**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co. of Australia
- **Model:** Ford Falcon® Limited Edition
- **Tier Supplier:** Trident Plastics
- **Material Supplier:** SABIC Innovative Plastics
- **Material:** MPPE/PA and Hydroformed Steel
- **Process:** Injection Molding over Hydroformed Steel Tube
- **Description:** This is industry's first injection-molded plastic over a hydroformed steel tube front-end module, yielding excellent craftsmanship and styling freedom, a 30% mass & 70% part-count reduction vs. stamped steel, package space reduction for aggressive lighting design, and improved airflow, which reduces radiator warranty issues. Special 3D plastic mechanical attachments to the steel tube create a secure connection and help the vehicle achieve a 5 Star Crash Rating – the first Australian vehicle to do so.

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**CATEGORY: Chassis / Hardware / Powertrain (continued)**

● **CAPLESS REFUELING SYSTEM WITH MIS-FUEL INHIBITOR**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford® Flex® CUV, Escape® SUV, F150® Pickup, Mercury® MKS® Sedan
- **Tier Supplier:** Martinrea Industries, Inc.
- **Material Supplier:** DuPont Automotive
- **Material:** Conductive Polyphthalamide (PPA),
- **Process:** Injection Molding, Ultrasonic Welding
- **Description:** North America's first plastic capless refueling system with a mis-fuel inhibitor uses injection-molded, ultrasonically welded high-temperature polyphthalamide (PPA), which is also conductive to bleed off static charge. Laser etching is used to mark operator instructions and serial numbers permanently. The unit, which combines vacuum relief with fuel sealing, features an ergonomic and "intuitive" design that eliminates previous challenges of unscrewing gas caps, the risk of losing or improperly reinstalling the cap, or not installing the cap at all. It also makes refueling faster and easier and prevents consumers from accidentally using the wrong fuel type, since it senses fuel-nozzle size. The capless refueling system also reduces comparative hydrocarbon emissions and meets LEV-II requirements for evaporative emissions.

● **OIL PAN MODULE**

- **OEM:** Daimler AG
- **Model:** C Class
- **Tier Supplier:** G. Bruss GmbH
- **Material Supplier:** DuPont Automotive
- **Material:** Glass-Reinforced Nylon 6/6
- **Process:** Injection Molding, Vibration Welding
- **Description:** This is the first modular plastic oil pan module adopted for passenger cars. It integrates an uppershell of diecast aluminum and a multifunctional lower shell injection molded from glass-reinforced nylon 6/6. the oil pan with windage tray and oil deflector, reducing oil vapor around the crankshaft (improving horsepower 5%), lowering air entrapment in the oil, and decreasing friction for longer bearing life. The component is 2.4 lb/1.1 kg lighter and 20-25% less costly than an entirely aluminium design and use of integrated oil baffles improves flow and reduces sloshing of oil.

**CATEGORY: Environmental**

● **SOY FOAM AUTOMOTIVE SEAT CUSHIONS**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford Mustang® Sports Car
- **Tier Supplier:** Lear Corp.
- **Material Supplier:** Not Stated
- **Material:** Urethane Foam from Soy Polyol
- **Process:** Not Stated
- **Description:** This is the first use of soy-based polyol to formulate flexible polyurethane foam for commercial automotive seat backs and cushions. By replacing up to 25% of the petroleum-derived polyol in typical urethane foam, a more sustainable material is created, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are reduced, no tooling changes are required, and cost is neutral.

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**CATEGORY: Environmental (continued)**

● **RECYCLED TPO AIR INLET PANEL/LEAF SCREEN**

- **OEM:** General Motors Corp.
- **Model:** GMC® Envoy® & Chevrolet® Trailblazer® SUVs
- **Tier Supplier:** Nyloncraft, Inc.
- **Material Supplier:** MRC Polymers Inc.
- **Material:** Thermoplastic Polyolefin (TPO)
- **Process:** Injection Molding
- **Description:** A proprietary paint-removal process produces recycled material with minimal contamination, a common challenge with recycled TPOs. Physical properties are equivalent to those of virgin resin for this aesthetic, non-painted part in a highly visible location subject to outdoor weathering. Cost savings of 2.2% were achieved vs. virgin resin and 445,000 lb/201,848 kg of landfill-bound material was salvaged. A proprietary, non-chemical paint-removal process produces recycled material with minimal contamination, a common challenge with recycled TPOs. Physical properties are equivalent to those of virgin resin for this aesthetic, non-painted part in a highly visible location subject to outdoor weathering. Cost savings of 2.2% were achieved vs. virgin resin and 445,000 lb/201,848 kg of landfill-bound material was salvaged.

**CATEGORY: Materials**

● **LONG-GLASS PP FOR FIRST-SURFACE OVERHEAD CONSOLE**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford® Flex® CUV
- **Tier Supplier:** Grupo Antolin
- **Material Supplier:** Ticona
- **Material:** Long-Glass PP
- **Process:** Injection Molding
- **Description:** This is a unique use of injection-molded long-glass fiber-PP materials in an above-the-beltline, Class A interior part with subtle texturing and in light colors. It replaced a talc-filled TPO material that had insufficient thermal stability. A special UV protection package helps stabilize the colorant; components are sonically welded to the bin door. The A-surface side of the mold is heated hotter than the B-surface side to ensure a resin-rich surface and avoid glass read-through for excellent aesthetics. Improved craftsmanship and appearance come at a slight cost reduction as well.

● **REAR FOOTWELL AMBIENT LIGHTING**

- **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
- **Model:** Ford® Flex® CUV
- **Tier Supplier:** CML Integrated Technologies
- **Material Supplier:** CYRO
- **Material:** Acrylic
- **Process:** Injection Molding
- **Description:** An entirely new feature, footwell ambient lighting provides interior vehicle illumination of rear footwells along with front and rear cup holder and rear HVAC-controls. Injection-molded, light-diffusing acrylic materials provide ambient lighting with uniformity of blended colors (from RGB LED light sources) and cross-car distribution of light without “hot spots.” The design approach also reduces costs and reduces vehicle power consumption while increasing usable life of interior lighting.

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**CATEGORY: Materials (continued)**

- **TPE FOR SLUSH MOLDING OF IP SKINS**
  - **OEM:** General Motors Corp.
  - **Model:** Saab® 9-7X SUV
  - **Tier Supplier:** Inteva Products
  - **Material Supplier:** Inteva Products
  - **Material:** TPO/TPE
  - **Process:** Slush Molding
  - **Description:** This patented application represents the first use of a TPO/TPE slush-molded IP manufactured in North America. The low-cost polyolefin-blend material for thin skins is produced on the same equipment as the vinyl and urethane it replaces while providing equivalent or better performance at 20% lower weight and without VOC emissions or fogging. A unique additive imparts high powder-packing density and superior powder flow.
  
- **LOW-MASS SMC HEAVY-TRUCK HOODS**
  - **OEM:** Navistar, Inc.
  - **Model:** International® TranStar® Class 8 Truck
  - **Tier Supplier:** Core Molding Technologies
  - **Material Supplier:** Ashland, Inc.
  - **Material:** Low-Density Sheet-Molding Compound (SMC)
  - **Process:** Compression Molding
  - **Description:** This lower density, tough, Class A SMC maintains the physical properties of standard SMC at 20% lower filler loadings via the use of nanoclay reinforcements. This lowers specific gravity from 1.9 to 1.55, reducing part weight, increasing hauling capacity of a truck 21 lb/9.5 kg/trip without exceeding load limits, and increasing productivity for a fleet owner by \$2-million USD/year.

**CATEGORY: Performance & Customization**

- **ADJUSTABLE EPOXY/CARBON FIBER COMPOSITE REAR WING**
  - **OEM:** Chrysler LLC
  - **Model:** Dodge® Viper® ACR Sports Car
  - **Tier Supplier:** Plasan Carbon Composites
  - **Material Supplier:** ETS
  - **Material:** Epoxy/Carbon Fiber Advanced Composite:
  - **Process:** Autoclave/Vacuum Bagged/Hand-Layup Prepreg
  - **Description:** Replacing a blow-molded thermoplastic, this advanced composite wing offers a high degree of aerodynamic stability (900 lb of down force) at minimum weight (6 lb/2.7 kg) even at 200 mph/322 kph, improving handling and braking. Down force is adjustable. Design uses a coreless construction and high-impact, exposed carbon fiber weave in a special UV-stabilized epoxy matrix.

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**CATEGORY: Performance & Customization (continued)**

- **HOOD ASSEMBLY WITH DUAL-WEAVE CARBON FIBER COMPOSITE**
  - **OEM:** General Motors Corp.
  - **Model:** Chevrolet® Corvette® ZR1 Sports Car
  - **Tier Supplier:** Plasan Carbon Composites
  - **Material Suppliers:** ETS & ACG
  - **Material:** Epoxy/Carbon Fiber Advanced Composite
  - **Process:** Autoclave/Vacuum Bagged/Hand-Layup Prepreg
  - **Description:** This unique signature hood for was designed for high visual impact by using the auto industry's first see-through, bonded polycarbonate "window" and special stabilized, fully exposed, visible carbon fiber weave (meeting Class A-underside requirements) on the underside of the hood. The assembly also offers significant mass reduction vs. SMC or metal, and meets FMVSS frontal crash requirements.
  
- **EXPOSED-WEAVE CARBON FIBER COMPOSITE ROOF ASSEMBLY**
  - **OEM:** General Motors Corp.
  - **Model:** Chevrolet® Corvette® ZR1 Sports Car
  - **Tier Supplier:** Plasan Carbon Composites
  - **Material Suppliers:** ETS & ACG
  - **Material:** Epoxy/Carbon Fiber Advanced Composite
  - **Process:** Autoclave/Vacuum Bagged/Hand-Layup Prepreg
  - **Description:** A proprietary, UV-stabilized and color corrected clear coat was developed to prevent yellowing of exposed-weave carbon fiber composite in this highly visible, Class A roof assembly with exacting aesthetic requirements. Replacing an earlier thermoplastic roof assembly, the bonded advanced composite version is lighter (lowering the vehicle's center of gravity), has lower CLTE, and is more robust, providing improved rollover protection.

**CATEGORY: Process / Assembly / Enabling Technologies**

- **TWIN-SHEET BLOW-MOLDED FUEL SYSTEM**
  - **OEM:** BMW AG
  - **Model:** BMW® 7 Series Sedans
  - **Tier Supplier:** Inergy Automotive Systems
  - **Material Supplier:** LyondellBasell, Kurraray, & Mitsui
  - **Material:** High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE)
  - **Process:** Twin-Sheet Blow Molding
  - **Description:** Twin-sheet blow molding offers the advantages of an extrusion blow-molded fuel system with the design flexibility of a half-shell process. Sheets extrude between a central core and the mold. Core actions attach the components during initial sheet forming. The empty core is withdrawn and the mold is closed to join the formed sheets. Fuel tanks formed via this process meet the strictest PZEV emissions requirements, while also providing higher tank capacity, lower emissions, weight and cost reductions, and elimination of post-mold operations.

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**CATEGORY: Process / Assembly / Enabling Technologies (continued)**

- **INFRAWELD® HEADLINER ASSEMBLY**
  - **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Ford F-Series® Pickups
  - **Tier Supplier:** Trim Quest
  - **Material Suppliers:** LyondellBasell & Amoco
  - **Material:** Polypropylene
  - **Process:** Infraweld® Infrared Welding
  - **Description:** Eliminating the mess, weight, and cost of hot-melt glue to attach various components (e.g. energy absorbers, wire harnesses, moon roof trim rings, console retainers, NVH pads, pig tails) to the backside of headliners, this process uses a halogen infrared light source and pressure to attach components quickly (4 sec). The weld that is formed is strong and higher temperature than hot-melt glue, making the headliner more heat tolerant, at a 10-15% weight and average \$3 USD/vehicle cost reduction, while also improving recyclability.
  
- **AIR-EXTRACTOR GRILLE**
  - **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Lincoln® MKS Sedan
  - **Tier Supplier:** Intier Automotive Inc.
  - **Material Supplier:** Ticona
  - **Material:** Acetal
  - **Process:** Injection Molding
  - **Description:** This is the largest air-extractor grille in the industry (31 in./780 mm long) and was a significant molding challenge due to the complexity of the grille's geometry and its size. The injection-molded grille also had stringent appearance and performance requirements for this luxury-vehicle application. Special resin development allowed the successful molding of this Class A trim component, saving approximately \$2 USD/vehicle and \$40,000 USD in tooling.
  
- **FRONT GRILLE WITH INSERT-MOLDED CHROME PAINTFILM**
  - **OEM:** Hyundai Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Hyundai® Avante® Compact Car
  - **Tier Supplier:** ECOplastics
  - **Material Supplier:** LG Chemical & Soliant
  - **Material:** Acrylonitrile Styrene Acrylate (ASA)
  - **Process:** Thermoforming and Injection Molding
  - **Description:** This chrome-look front grille is achieved in a single shot thanks to 6 pre-forms of bright paint film, eliminating post-mold chrome plating and painting and providing a more durable part with fewer warranty issues and better resale value. Cost and weight are reduced, environmental and waste management issues are eliminated (as with plating or painting), less energy is used, and this product is 100% recyclable.

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**CATEGORY: Safety**

- **POLYSTYRENE FOAM FOR HEAD-IMPACT PROTECTION**
  - **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Ford Focus® Compact Car
  - **Tier Supplier:** Grupo Antolin North America
  - **Material Supplier:** Dow Automotive
  - **Material:** Polystyrene Foam Sheet
  - **Process:** Wire-Cut Foam Blocks
  - **Description:** This was the best-in-class, low-cost energy-absorption (EA) countermeasure based on zero tooling, piece price, and time to market. Foamed styrene is extruded into blocks and then wire cut into complex shapes, providing significant weight (25% lighter), cost, and timing benefits vs. competitive products.
  
- **EXPANDED POLYPROPYLENE FOAM HEAD-RESTRAINT CORE FOR FMVSS-202A**
  - **OEM:** Ford Motor Co.
  - **Model:** Various
  - **Tier Supplier:** Windsor Machine Group
  - **Material Supplier:** JSP
  - **Material:** Expanded-Polypropylene (EPP) Foam
  - **Process:** Steam-Chest Molding
  - **Description:** This patent-pending safety application is the first time an expanded-polypropylene (EPP) foam head-restraint insert that has been used to meet FMVSS-202a static requirements in a headrest. Local depressions in the core are used to reduce permanent set during FMVSS-202 “backset” and “height” retention testing. A unique snap-fit design is formed without the need for slides or lifters in the low-cost steam-chest tooling, providing a secure fit to the head-restraint rod and ease of assembly. The core’s unique geometry allows for a large number of cavities (32) to be used in the mold, helping increase productivity and reduce piece costs. The application provides significant piece-price and tooling avoidance savings vs. injection- or blow-molded plastic cores.

This year’s ***SPE Automotive Innovation Awards*** gala will be held at Burton Manor ([www.Burtonmanor.net](http://www.Burtonmanor.net)) in Livonia, Mich. on Nov. 20. All nominations accepted for this year’s competition will be on display at the event with signage explaining their innovations.

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*SPE Announces 2008 Innovation Awards Finalists*  
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For more information about the ***Automotive Innovation Awards Competition and Gala*** or to download nomination forms and rules, visit the SPE Automotive Division's website at [www.speautomotive.com/inno.htm](http://www.speautomotive.com/inno.htm) , or contact the group at +1.248.244.8993, or write SPE Automotive Division, 1800 Crooks Road, Suite A, Troy, MI 48084, USA.

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