FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (09/09/09)
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PLASAN'S LOWNSDALE DISCUSSES OBSTACLES, SOLUTIONS, TRENDS FOR AUTOMOTIVE CARBON COMPOSITES AT SPE® ACCE

Speaker has Long History in Automotive Composites Segment, Predicts Bright Future for Lightweight Carbon Fiber Reinforced Plastics in Passenger Vehicles

TROY (DETROIT), MICH. – Gary Lownsdale, Engineering and R&D manager at Plasan Carbon Composites (Bennington, Vt.) will give the closing keynote address at this year's ***SPE Automotive Composites Conference & Exhibition*** (SPE ACCE). The talk, entitled *Automotive Carbon Composites: Historic Obstacles, Current Solutions, & Future Trends,* will run from 4:00-4:30 p.m. on Sept. 16, 2009 and will review the issues that have historically prevented carbon fiber composites from evolving in the automotive industry, describe how those obstacles are now being overcome, and give likely trends for the use of these materials through 2018, including key milestones that will impact acceptance such as pedestrian-protection legislation, tougher fuel-economy standards, and next-generation vehicle architectures. The speaker, who has spent most of the last four decades working with composites in the automotive and marine industries and has also been active in the development of low-cost carbon fiber, brings a unique perspective to the topic.

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About Gary Lownsdale

Gary Lownsdale, currently Engineering and R&D manager at Plasan Carbon Composites, has spend the majority of his 43-year career working in the automotive industry with a strong emphasis on composites. Excepting a 5-year stint in the marine industry, Lownsdale has worked for each of the "Detroit Three" automakers, as well as several tier suppliers, a major resin supplier, two carbon fiber suppliers, and two producers of carbon nanotubes.

Lownsdale started his career using thermoset composites to reduce weight and improve the performance of '60s-era muscle cars. In the middle of his career, Lownsdale turned his focus to thermoplastics and was responsible for directing design and development of the composite-bodied *Saturn* vehicles from then General Motors Corp. as well as the *Z-1* roadster from BMW. In fact, in recognition of his work for Saturn Corp., Lownsdale was awarded an honorary chief engineer title. Later in his career, he served as COO for a composite-bodied electric-vehicle company, trans2 Corp. (which was subsequently acquired by then DaimlerChrysler) and as CEO of MasterCraft Boat Co., where his automotive composites background was used to improve the performance of ski boats. His contributions have been recognized by a number of innovation awards in both the automotive and marine industries.

For the past ten years, Lownsdale has consulted on the development of low-cost carbon fiber and nanomaterials for companies such as Conoco-Phillips, Nanocyl, and Hyperion Catalysis. He is currently collaborating with Oak Ridge National Laboratory on develop of low-cost carbon fiber and fast curing methods for carbon composites.

Lownsdale holds a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Cincinnati and attended the engineering-management-training program at the Chrysler Institute of Engineering. He also has been an adjunct instructor for the University of Tennessee's business college and has served on many committees for the Society of Automotive Engineers, Engineering Society of Detroit, and the Society for Plastics Engineers. His true passion is restoring and racing classic British sports cars and racecars.

About the SPE ACCE

The ACCE typically draws over 400 speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees from 14 countries on 4 continents with fully one-third indicating they work for an OEM involved in ground transportation or aerospace/aviation. Interestingly, over the past few years, the types of transportation OEMs represented at the show have continued to broaden beyond traditional automotive and light truck, to include agriculture, truck & bus, heavy truck, and aviation. This trend may indicate greater interest in technology sharing among transportation OEMs and suppliers.

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Held annually in suburban Detroit, the ACCE provides an environment dedicated solely to discussion and networking about advances in the automotive composites industry. Its global appeal is evident in the diversity of exhibitors, speakers, and attendees who come to the conference from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia / Pacific as well as North America and who represent transportation OEMs and tier suppliers; composite materials, processing equipment, additives, and reinforcement suppliers; trade associations, consultants, university and government labs; media; and investment bankers. The show is sponsored jointly by the SPE Automotive and Composites Divisions.

The mission of SPE is to promote scientific and engineering knowledge relating to plastics. SPE's Automotive and Composites Divisions work to advance plastics and plastic-based composites technologies worldwide and to educate industry, academia, and the public about these advances. Both divisions are dedicated to educating, promoting, recognizing, and communicating technical accomplishments for all phases of plastics and plastic-based composite developments, including materials, processing, equipment, tooling, design and testing, and application development.

For more information about the SPE Automotive Composites Conference, visit the Composites' Division website at **www.4spe.org/communities/divisions/d39.php**, or the Automotive Division's website at **www.speautomotive.com/comp.htm** , or contact the group at +1.248.244.8993, or write SPE Automotive Division, 1800 Crooks Road, Suite A, Troy, MI 48084, USA. For more information on the Society of Plastics Engineers International or other SPE events, visit the SPE website at **www.4spe.org**, or call +1.203.775.0471.

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ATTENTION EDITORS: DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.