



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (10/17/07)

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HIROAKI YAMAMOTO OF GREEN TOKAI TO RECEIVE NEW SPE® HONOR AT INNOVATION AWARDS GALA

TROY, (DETROIT) MICH. – Mr. Hiroaki Yamamoto, chief technology officer of Green Tokai Company, Ltd. (Brookville, Ohio) will receive a special award for **Global Excellence in Plastics Engineering** presented by the Automotive Division of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE®) International at its 37th-annual **SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Gala** on November 7 at Burton Manor (www.burtonmanor.net/) in Livonia, Mich. The first recipient of this new award, Yamamoto was chosen for his extensive work on paintfilms for molded plastic parts and his efforts to localize significant plastics content from U.S. suppliers at Japanese automakers producing vehicles in North America.

The **Global Excellence in Plastics Engineering Award** recognizes an individual's technical contributions in plastics engineering that have advanced the state-of-the-art as well as engineering leadership that has led to the adoption of more polymeric materials on ground-transportation vehicles through the efforts of technical teams under the honoree's management.

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Yamamoto has 2 decades of experience in automotive product design and development at Green Tokai, where he has made significant technical contributions to advance the use of plastic and rubber parts. He holds 15 U.S. patents as well as numerous joint filings in the European Union and Japan. A significant component of his research relates to breakthroughs that enabled paintfilms to be used more effectively on molded plastic parts, particularly those with complex surfaces. Not only does paintfilm technology offer important cost and environmental benefits, but it also improved aesthetics and durability of the parts because paintfilms are more damage resistant than paint. This, in turn, has led to greater use of polymeric materials on vehicles. In fact, Yamamoto's work in paintfilms has increased sales at Green Tokai by more than \$50-million USD and the company has subsequently licensed the technology to automotive suppliers in North American and the United Kingdom as well as back to its parent company in Japan – a very unusual circumstance. Besides individual technical contributions in this area, Yamamoto also led Green Tokai's development team during commercial scale-up of exterior automotive parts with paintfilms. Presently, there are approximately 18-million plastic parts on vehicles made by Green Tokai using Yamamoto's patented paintfilm technology.

Other patented innovations from Yamamoto include improved ejector-plate structures and methods for demolding plastic parts; methods for producing automotive trim components with bi- and plural-component show surfaces; and methods for minimizing shrink lines on molded trim parts. Another notable development by Yamamoto in the early 1990s was the 1-piece exterior weather seal with an elastomer sealing lip and PVC molding. It replaced the more costly 2-piece EPDM rubber lip and PVC molding design, which had been the industry standard at that time. This improvement provided significant weight and part cost saving along with a 50% reduction in tooling expenses. The new design was initially used on the 1992 MY Oldsmobile® Cutlass® passenger car from General Motors Corp. (GM). The concept later became the standard for exterior weather seals at GM.

Still another important contribution by Yamamoto was his demonstrated leadership in localizing the raw material base used by Green Tokai to suppliers in North American rather than Japan, as is more common. In a single year, Yamamoto localized more than 90% of Green Tokai's raw material purchases, including plastics, adhesives, flocking, and metals. His work in finding domestic suppliers for Green Tokai also led to other Japanese suppliers in North America switching a portion of their supply base to local providers.

His efforts in educating the automotive industry on the benefits of plastics have been recognized with 2 prestigious awards. In 1999, Yamamoto led the team that received the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers' award for *New Product of the Year* for developments on paintfilms for plastic parts. In 2001, his team received the organization's national award for *Best New Technology*. Green Tokai has also been part of the winning team at the ***SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Gala*** for *Most Innovative Use of Plastics*, and was the New Product Design Competition winner from the Society of the Plastics Industry in 2006.

Yamamoto was Green Tokai's first technical center general manager. In his current position as chief technology officer for the company, he is responsible for product design and engineering of all Green Tokai products, including new product startups. He is also responsible for training the company's engineers.

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According to Jeff Bailey, vice-president - Operations, at Soliant LLC, one of Green Tokai's suppliers, "Hiro Yamamoto is greatly respected by his peers in the industry, including those at Green Tokai, OEM customers, suppliers, competitors, and more because of his plastic material and automotive design knowledge, experience, and ideas. Many OEM customer and suppliers come to see him on a dally basis or call for information – even from Japan. He leads and encourages his team members to develop challenging part programs and he is admired for his 'never give up' attitude. He is also a respected father and family man."

Prior to the start of the **SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Gala**, Yamamoto will be introduced to the media at a short press conference along with other SPE executive award winners. These include James Queen, group vice-president - Global Engineering at GM and this year's **Executive Leadership** award winner; Lawrence (Larry) Burns, president, Research & Development and Strategic Planning at GM and this year's **Global Executive Engineering Leadership** award winner; and the **Lifetime Achievement** award winner, Joshua (Josh) Madden, *SPE Emeritus*, who had a long and distinguished career at both GM and Volkswagen of America and was responsible for numerous automotive plastics "firsts." All 4 men will then be honored at a VIP cocktail reception reserved for program sponsors and senior-level automotive executives. The VIP cocktail reception, sponsored by Ticona Engineering Polymers, has been called "One of the absolute best networking opportunities in town" by supplier executives attending the event.

Green Tokai Company, Ltd. (<http://www.greentokai.com/>) is a leading supplier of high-quality products made from plastics and rubber extrusion and injection molding, including chin spoilers, rocker and body side moldings, quarter window (window reveal) moldings, and pillar moldings for vehicle exteriors; single- and dual-durometer plastic extrusions for inner and outer weatherstrip seals, and windshield, roof, and rear window moldings (weather seals); and rubber hood, trunk, and door seals. The company supplies the North American manufacturing operations of Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co., Ltd., Mitsubishi Motor Corp., Subaru Div. of Fuji Heavy Industries, Mazda Motor Corp., Suzuki Motor Corp., and Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., as well as GM and Ford Motor Company. Established in 1987, Green Tokai retains 1,300 employees at three North American facilities, which are located in Brookville Ohio and Maysville, Ky. Green Tokai's parent company is Tokai Kogyo, which maintains operations in Obu City, Kinnura, and Shimojo, Japan. Tokai Kogyo also operates in China as Ningbo Tokai Minth, in Thailand as TOACS, Ltd., and has a research facility in Brussels, Belgium.

SPE's **Automotive Innovation Awards** program is the largest competition of its kind in the world and the oldest recognition event 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 module and why it merits the claim as *Year's Most Innovative Use of Plastics*. This annual event typically draws 600-800 OEM engineers, automotive and plastics industry executives, and media. As is customary, funds raised from the event are used for SPE educational efforts and technical seminars, which help to secure the role of plastics in the advancement of the automobile.

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The mission of SPE International 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 for 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 Gala**, visit the SPE Automotive Division's website at 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.

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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