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FOWLERVILLE, Mich., Oct. 11, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Fowlerville, Mich. Asahi Kasei Plastics introduces Soform a specialty patent pending soft-touch polypropylene for automotive interior applications. This new material improves automotive interiors by delivering a 'soft-to-the-touch' surface while retaining its integrity as a structural lightweight plastic. "Soform enriches the tactile experience and enhances comfort, providing extra value to the automotive consumer, without compromising design or functionality," said Ramesh Iyer, vice president of commercial operations, Asahi Kasei Plastics.

Enhanced Buyer PerceptionHaptics – the science of touch – plays an important role in how consumers perceive a product. A growing amount of research is showing that soft surfaces touched when in the process of making a decision impacts the outcome of the consumer's decision. The sense of touch also evokes an emotional response that instills a greater sense of ownership, causing the consumer to place a higher monetary value on the object[i]. Haptics have been shown to ultimately influence the buying decision even if how a product feels and performance are unrelated[ii].

Soform's development, is based on haptics, as every object people touch is capable of providing tactile feedback. Automotive components designed to be touched offer automotive manufacturers new opportunities for positive consumer interaction, and open up new ways to

deliver a positive consumer experience.

"Plastics are not ordinarily thought of as soft, especially plastics used for structural components in automotive applications," said Iyer. "The result of our research on haptics and its prominent role in interior surfaces was Soform, a material that delivers both the softness that consumers desire while maintaining structural rigidity and appealing aesthetics."

Soform Offers Versatility and Streamlined Processing Soform is ideal for automotive trim parts and components including interior door panels and other surfaces where a good tactile experience is desired. It is available in a wide range of physical properties (flexural modulus, hardness, tensile elongation, gloss) and moldable in any color and texture. Soform can be directly single-shot injection molded, replacing the need for two-shot molding or over molding. Good scratch, chemical resistance and the soft feel, is achieved right out of the mold without secondary processing or painting.

Environmentally Sound With fewer material types present, automotive parts made with Soform have better recyclability and higher end of life value. By combining many desirable characteristics into one lightweight plastic, Soform provides benefits along its entire life cycle – reducing the number of materials in the supply chain and processing steps benefiting both the energy footprint and cost.

About Asahi Kasei Plastics Asahi Kasei Plastics is a leading international custom compounder of advanced engineered polymers and the largest short glass reinforced polypropylene manufacturer in North America. With a diverse and fully customizable product portfolio, and manufacturing facilities located across the globe, Asahi Kasei Plastics is providing unique engineering solutions for the global market.

Continually committed to minimizing their impact on the planet and delivering product uniformity at each manufacturing location, Asahi Kasei Plastics upholds strict Corporate Social Responsibility, product specification standards, and regulatory compliance to provide high quality materials while maintaining a minimal carbon footprint. Their product lines include THERMYLENE® (polypropylene), LEONA™ (nylon 66, 66+6i), THERMYLON® (nylon 6, 66), TENAC™

(acetal) and XYRON™

(modified polyphenylene ether – mPPE), STYLAC

Asahi Kasei Plastics Announces Soform™ For Automotive Interiors

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(acrylonitrile butadiene styrene – ABS).

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[i] Gregory, Sean. "Want to Save Some Money? Shop Without Touching." – <http://time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1889081,00.html>

[ii] Peck, J. and J. Wiggins. "It Just Feels Good: Customers' Affective Response to Touch and Its Influence on Persuasion." *Journal of Marketing* 70 (2006): 56-69.

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