

First Webasto Supplier Innovation Award goes to Freudenberg Sealing Technologies

Some 80 companies competed for the award of the mobility industry's systems partner. The sealing specialists of Freudenberg convinced the expert jury of Webasto with a new type of cover concept for battery systems in electric vehicles. A joint study is now planned.

Schierling – March 30, 2023 – This week Freudenberg Sealing Technologies was honored by Webasto, one of the top 100 suppliers to the automotive industry, with its Supplier Innovation Award. The company launched the competition for intelligent solutions to further develop its products and processes last year. Some 140 ideas for the predefined fields of core materials and manufacturing processes, design elements, electronics and mechatronics, and smart factory competed for the first Webasto Supplier Innovation Award. A team of experts from Webasto chose a cover solution for battery systems developed by Freudenberg. Both companies now intend to work out the concrete advantages of the approach for the battery production of Webasto as part of a study. Representatives from both sides have signed a memorandum of understanding to this end.

Jan-Kristof Hohenstein, Executive Vice President Purchasing & Supplier Quality, presented the award at the Schierling site, the global competence center for Webasto battery systems. "Impulses from outside are important for us to maintain and further expand our market position in our dynamic, highly competitive industry," Hohenstein explained. The automotive supplier's goal is to see competent technology companies, which may even understand themselves as competitors in some areas, as strategic partners in others. In the future, Webasto wants to involve these kinds of suppliers in development projects as early as possible to be able to offer automotive manufacturers and end customers forward-looking solutions for sustainable mobility. "We are enthused about how great the response to our first call for entries was and the level of the applications across the board," said Hohenstein.

Innovative approach for high-performance e-vehicles

"The decisive factor in Freudenberg Sealing Technologies winning the award was its extremely innovative approach, which is particularly interesting for high-performance e-vehicles. It enables optimized cooling of the battery cells, which are subject to particularly high stress in this area," explained Hartung Wilstermann, Executive Vice President Battery Systems at Webasto, at the event.

For the new cover concept, Freudenberg is largely replacing metal elements of the battery housing by plastic components. The solution also includes a special seal and the electromagnetic compatibility protection that is essential for the battery. Due to the materials used significant weight savings can be achieved, which is of great advantage for electromobility. The special approach also offers more freedom in the design of the battery system and allows the integration of additional functionalities, such as for wireless communication between the battery management system and the battery cells. "I am looking forward to the joint study with Freudenberg and am curious to see the positive impetus and concrete benefits we can draw from it for the development of future battery generations of Webasto," said Wilstermann.

Presentation of the Webasto Supplier Innovation Award regularly in the future

In fall 2022 at its International Supplier Day under the motto #futurize2gether, Webasto had already honored one of its suppliers in each of the categories: quality, cost efficiency, supply chain resilience, sustainability, and digitalization. There was a separate call for entries for the Supplier Innovation Award. Partners of Webasto and suppliers who had not previously worked with the automotive supplier were both eligible to apply. “We are planning to invite entries for an Innovation Award on a regular basis in the future. Thereby, we are also addressing young companies in particular that want to develop new technology concepts and launch them on the market but are still looking for a suitable industrial partner to do so,” said Hohenstein.

About Webasto

The Webasto Group is a global innovative systems partner to the mobility industry and one of the 100 largest suppliers to the automotive sector worldwide. The company's offering includes in-house developed roof, heating and cooling systems for various types of vehicles, batteries and charging solutions for hybrid and electric vehicles, and additional services related to thermal management and electromobility. Among the customers of Webasto are manufacturers of passenger cars, commercial vehicles and boats, as well as dealers and end customers. In 2021, the Group generated sales of 3.7 billion euros and employed around 15,700 people at over 50 locations. The headquarters of the company, which was founded in 1901, is located in Stockdorf near Munich (Germany).

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