Webasto’s First Supply of Polycarbonate Panel To China

Rising demand for lightweight roof devices – €45 MN investment in polycarbonate technology

Stockdorf/Munich – December 10, 2013 – Lightweight construction has now become one of the most sustainable trends in the automotive industry. Worldwide demand for Webasto components made of polycarbonate for roof systems is significantly rising. For the first time the world market leader for roof systems is producing a polycarbonate (PC) panel at its plant in Schierling for supply to China. The PC panel is used at the Guangzhou plant to make the panorama roof for the Golf A7. The roofs are then shipped to FAW VW in Foshan and assembled in cars for the Chinese market.

Dr. Holger Engelmann, Webasto’s CEO, is convinced that, "in the future, roof components made of polycarbonate will gain an important share in the largest automobile market in the world."
Experts predict that the share of polycarbonate in cars will rise to about 20 percent over the next five years. Polycarbonate has half the density of glass but extremely high impact strength. Elements made of polycarbonate can therefore achieve weight savings of up to 50 percent. Another factor is that sliding and panorama roofs are very popular in China, topping the equipment statistics worldwide. About every third car made in China is delivered with a sliding or panorama roof. With high-end luxury cars from international makes, it is even every second car.

Investment of 45 Million Euros in Polycarbonate Technology
Due to several new projects Webasto continues to invest in lightweight construction technology. "We have invested 45 million euros (= $61M US) to expand our technology leadership in polycarbonate components for car roof systems even further," says Engelmann. First, a new production hall (about 4500 m²/48,438 ft²) was built at the Schierling site near Regensburg. Then, three new injection-molding machines and a new paint shop to guarantee that production of polycarbonate components stays at the latest state of the art. As a result, these plant extensions assure a production capacity of one million components annually. Besides fixed roof elements for the Smart, Webasto also produces panels in Schierling for various car manufacturers. These low-weight panels surround the front and sides of sliding and panorama roofs, producing a high-quality solid-glass appearance for the entire roof area. Technically, manufacturing components for roof systems to Class A standard is a highly complex undertaking. To achieve this, Webasto makes the components exclusively at the Plastics Competence Center in Schierling.
About Webasto:
Webasto Group based in Stockdorf near Munich has been a family-owned business ever since the company was founded in 1901. The group operates internationally at over 50 locations (over 30 of these production sites) in the divisions roof and thermo systems. Webasto is one of the top 100 automotive suppliers worldwide. For 2012 the Group realized a sales volume of more than 2.4 Billion Euros and employs over 10,000 employees. The company’s core competencies encompass the development, production and sales of complete roof and convertible systems as well as heating, cooling and ventilation systems for passenger cars, commercial and special vehicles, recreational vehicles and boats. For more information please visit www.webasto-group.com

Press Contact:
Webasto Group
Petra Diederichs
Vice President Corporate Communications
Tel: +49 89 8 57 94-670
Email: petra.diederichs@webasto.com

Dr. Petra Gulz
Group Manager Corporate Communications
Tel: +49 89 8 57 94-650
Email: petra.gulz@webasto.com