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Inventor(s)

Schoonover; James et al.

EXTRUDED AIRBAG RAMP

Abstract

An extruded side curtain airbag ramp including a tear-resistant material forming at least one attachment feature and method for manufacturing said extruded side curtain airbag ramp. The airbag ramp according to the present invention incorporates a plurality of extruded materials and provides an easier manufactured product and attachment.

Inventors: Schoonover; James (Shelby Township, MI), Rutoski; Robert (Imlay City, MI)

Applicant: Vintech Industries, Inc. (Imlay City, MI)

Family ID: 70770089

Assignee: Vintech Industries, Inc. (Imlay City, MI)

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Background/Summary

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS [0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 62/771,355 filed Nov. 26, 2018. The disclosure of the above application is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to an automotive extruded side curtain airbag ramp and process for manufacturing same.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Safety restraints, such as side curtain air bags are well known in the automotive industry for occupant protection in the event of a collision. In the event of a side curtain air bag deploying, an air bag ramp guides the deploying air bag to the desired cab position in the vehicle toward the predetermined position designed for helping protect the vehicle occupant.

[0004] Conventional side air bag ramps for side air bags are made from a single material, and the product designs make the ramps difficult to manufacture. In addition, the ramps are typically a plastic olefin and the polymer is tough. This makes attaching the airbag ramps to the any material difficult, e.g., sewing to a headliner is difficult owing to the toughness of the material. By way of example, it is difficult for the suppliers to original equipment manufacturers to sew the ramps to the material, e.g., headliner material, because the tough ramp material is difficult to sew. To overcome this problem, if the ramp material were made thinner for making it easier to sew, then the thinner material could rip or otherwise break, which is yet another significant issue.

[0005] Therefore, it is desirable to have an economical side curtain air bag ramp and process for manufacturing same that incorporates an easily manufactured design and that is easier for customer install to an air bag device, e.g., sewn, fastener, clipped, etc.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention is generally directed to an airbag ramp, in particular, to an extruded side curtain airbag ramp and method for manufacturing same. The airbag ramp according to the present invention incorporates a plurality of extruded materials and provides an easier manufactured product and attachment.

[0007] According to one preferred embodiment of the present invention the airbag ramp incorporates at least two materials, preferably, at least three materials, more preferably at least four materials. A first material is a predetermined material that is hard. A second material is a predetermined material that is tear resistant. A third material is a predetermined material that is a softer material than at least the first material. The second material is suitable to allow operable connection to an airbag, in particular, preferably to the material of the headliner. Preferably, the second material allows the airbag ramp to be sewn to the airbag. Alternatively, the airbag ramp incorporates at least one fastener (e.g., at least one retainer, clip, extruded fastener, channel, barb, etc) to operably connect to the airbag without the need to sew, or alternatively, in addition to sewing.

[0008] The fabrication of the airbag ramp is preferably an in-line up/down process incorporating at least two extruders. In accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, at least a first extruder and a second extruder are provided. At least one of the materials is extruded or a plurality co-extruded at the first extruder forming predetermined features/profiles. The extrusion then runs into at least one mid-line fabrication device (e.g., at least one die, bulb die, etc) to cut

away or otherwise remove any predetermined material that is not needed in the end product to thereby begin to form or profile the product. The part is then run into the second extruder for extruding at least one of the other materials. More extruders and mid-line fabrication devices are contemplated depending on the application without departure from the scope of the present invention. The process in accordance with the present invention is easier to install or otherwise attach to a part and adds more value to manufacturing and the end product than conventional fabrication of airbag ramps.

[0009] Further areas of applicability of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description provided hereinafter. It should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating the preferred embodiment of the invention, are intended for purposes of illustration only and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] The present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed description and the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0011] FIG. 1 is a front elevation view of an airbag ramp, in accordance with the present invention;

[0012] FIG. 2 is a front elevation view of an airbag ramp, in accordance with the present invention;

[0013] FIG. 3 is a front elevation view of an airbag ramp with a stiffening feature;

[0014] FIG. 4 is a front elevation view of an airbag ramp illustrating features of the present invention operable for eliminating the stiffening feature, in accordance with the present invention; and

[0015] FIG. 5 is a schematic of a system for manufacturing an airbag ramp.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0016] The following description of the preferred embodiment(s) is merely exemplary in nature and is in no way intended to limit the invention, its application, or uses.

[0017] Referring to FIGS. 1-5 generally, and more particularly to FIGS. 1-2, in accordance with the present invention there is provided an extruded airbag ramp shown generally at **10**. The airbag ramp **10** is preferably a side curtain airbag ramp. The airbag ramp **10** has many significant advantages, including, that the airbag ramp **10** is operable for easier manufacturing and for connecting to an airbag easier, e.g., sewing or clipping to a part, e.g., sewing to a headliner. The airbag ramp **10** includes a plurality of predetermined materials, wherein at least one of the materials is a hard material and at least one of the materials is a material that is softer than the hard material. Preferably, at least one other of the materials is a tear-resistant material.

[0018] A first portion of the airbag ramp, shown generally at **12**, is formed of a first material. The first material is preferably the hardest of all the other materials of the ramp **10**. The first material is preferably a polypropylene. Typically, the first material portion has a durometer of about 50 D, however, greater or lesser durometers are contemplated depending on the application without departure from the scope of the present invention. The first portion **12** has a predetermined shape and dimensions (e.g., profile(s), shape(s), contour(s), thickness(s), length(s), width(s), height(s), etc) depending on the particular application. FIG. 1 depicts the first portion **12** with an exemplary generally horizontal section **13a** and a generally vertical section **13b** with a generally curved section indicated generally at **13c**. Preferably, the sections **13a-13c** are integrally formed in the same extruder, e.g., a first extruder, as will be described further below. FIG. 2 depicts the first portion **12** of the first material with an exemplary predetermined profile that does not include the generally horizontal section **13a** of FIG. 1. It is understood that the exemplary sections in the Figures are adaptable to any application and can be any predetermined configuration depending on the particular application without departure from the scope of the present invention.

[0019] A second portion of the airbag ramp, shown generally at **14**, is formed of a second material. The second material is softer than the first material. The second material is preferably a thermoplastic olefin (TPO). Typically, the second material portion has a durometer of about 50B, however, greater or lesser durometers are contemplated depending on the application without departure from the scope of the present invention. The second portion **14** has a predetermined shape and dimensions (e.g., profile(s), shape(s), contour(s), thickness(s), length(s), width(s), height(s), etc) depending on the application. FIG. **1** depicts the second portion **14** with an exemplary generally horizontal first section **15a**. The second portion **14** further includes another portion **15c** (FIGS. **1-2**) or ramp section formed of the second material, e.g., extruded or co-extruded. The portion **15c** adjoins the structural section **12** at one end. The first portion **15a** adjoins the structural section **12**, preferably, the generally horizontal first section **13a** of the structural portion **12** at the other end. FIG. **2** depicts the second portion **14** with an exemplary generally horizontal first section **15a** including a further extending generally horizontal second section **15b** adjoining to the first portion **12/13b**. The second portion **14** further includes a third portion **15c** (FIGS. **1-2**) or ramp section formed of the second material, e.g., extruded or co-extruded. The third portion **15c** adjoins the structural section **12**. A channel **23** is formed by the cooperating sections **12** and **14** to receive a predetermined suitable component. The channel **23** generally runs the length of the assembly **10**. It is understood that the exemplary sections in the Figures are adaptable for suitability in any application and can be any predetermined configuration depending on the particular application without departure from the scope of the present invention. It is understood that the assembly **10** is any predetermined length depending on the application without departure from the scope of the present invention.

[0020] Alternatively, the ramp section **15c** is at least partly formed of a third material, typically a soft material, preferably thermoplastic vulcanizates (TPV). FIGS. **1-2** illustrate at least the end **15d** of the ramp section **15c** being TPV, which may be a cut away or otherwise formed end **15d** in a mid-line fabrication device, as will be described in greater detail below.

[0021] Referring to FIGS. **1-5** generally, and more particularly to FIG. **4** the use of the hard material eliminates the need for additional strengthening features, such as the expanse of material "A" indicated in FIGS. **3** and **4** located generally between the horizontal and ramp segments of an airbag ramp **100**.

[0022] Referring to FIGS. **1-2** generally, the airbag ramp **10** includes at least one attachment portion **16** formed of a third material. The third material is preferably a predetermined tear-resistant material or anti-tear material. Preferably, there are at least two attachment portions **16** and **16** (see FIGS. **1-2**). Most preferably, each attachment portion **16** is operable for sewing the airbag ramp **10** to at least one predetermined vehicle part **21**, e.g., vehicular body panel, headliner, both the vehicular body panel and headliner, etc. An exemplary sew line is indicated at **17**. Alternatively, or in combination with sewing, adhesive, or any other suitable attachment, at least one fastener **19** is incorporated with the airbag ramp **10** (e.g., at least one retainer, clip, extruded fastener, channel, barb, etc) for attachment to the predetermined vehicle part. Other vehicle components for the airbag ramp to be attached to are contemplated depending on the application without departure from the scope of the present invention. Alternatively, the attachment portion **16** is formed as the same material as the structural portion **13b**.

[0023] It is understood that the profile and shape and contour and features and etc of the airbag ramp **10** are adaptable for suitable use in any airbag for any vehicle, etc depending on any and all applications without departure from the scope of the present invention.

[0024] It is understood that the materials and locations are exemplary. It is understood that the portions and part profiles are exemplary. The airbag ramp part is adaptable for suitability according to any application without departure from the scope of the present invention.

[0025] Referring to FIGS. **1-5** generally, and more particularly to FIG. **5**, according to an aspect of the present invention, the fabrication of the airbag ramp is preferably an in-line up/down process

incorporating at least two extruders shown generally at **200**. In accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, at least a first extruder **202** and at least one second extruder **206** are provided. At least one of the materials (e.g., first material **12**, preferably first **12** and second materials **14** and third **16** materials), is extruded (or co-extruded) at the first extruder **202** forming predetermined features/profiles and runs into at least one mid-line fabrication device **204** (e.g., at least one die, bulb die, etc) to cut away or otherwise remove any predetermined material that is not needed in the end product to thereby begin to form or profile the product. The part is then run into the second extruder **206** for extruding at least one of the other materials (e.g., **15d**). The process in accordance with the present invention is easier and adds more value to the end product than conventional fabrication of airbag ramps.

[0026] While a side curtain airbag ramp is described, it is understood that the present invention is adaptable for any airbag (e.g., front driver, front passenger) without departure from the scope of the present invention and adaptable for any extrusion in industry (e.g., UTV, ATV, recreational vehicle, offroad vehicles) without departure from the scope of the present invention. It is further understood that the present invention is adaptable depending on the application without departure from the scope of the present invention, e.g., requiring an extrusion attached to a second component, seals, etc.

[0027] The description of the invention is merely exemplary in nature and, thus, variations that do not depart from the essence of the invention are intended to be within the scope of the invention. Such variations are not to be regarded as a departure from the spirit and scope of the invention.

Claims

1. An extruded airbag ramp, comprising: a plurality of materials, wherein at least one of the materials is a hard material for a structural portion of the airbag ramp and at least one of another of the materials is a tear-resistant material providing at least one attachment portion suitable to operably attach said airbag ramp to another predetermined part.
2. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein the tear-resistant material is sewn to the part.
3. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein the part is a headliner for a vehicle.
4. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein the attachment portion includes at least one fastener attachable to said part.
5. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 4, wherein the at least one fastener is at least one clip.
6. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, where the plurality of materials includes at least one third material that is tear-resistant.
7. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein said the extruded airbag ramp is a side curtain airbag ramp and is operably connected to said part, wherein said part is a headliner for a vehicle.
8. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 7, wherein the structural portion of said airbag ramp is sewn to said part.
9. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein the structural portion of said airbag ramp has a higher durometer than said tear-resistant material.
10. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein the structural portion provides predetermined amount of stiffness to eliminate an expanse of material required for strengthening substantially between the structural portion and attachment portion.
11. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein the structural portion and attachment portion together form a channel.
12. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, a durometer of at least one material is at least about 50 D.
13. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein at least one material is thermoplastic vulcanizates
14. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 1, wherein the attachment portion of tear-resistant material is bounded on both sides by polypropylene material.

15. An extruded side curtain airbag ramp, comprising: at least one first material; at least one second material; and at least one third material, wherein said first, second and third materials are co-extruded; wherein the first, second or third materials are adapted to provide stiffness to a structural portion of the extruded airbag ramp; and wherein the first, second or third materials are anti-tear material adapted to provide at least one attachment portion operably connected to a predetermined part.

16. The extruded side curtain airbag ramp of claim 15, wherein the at least one attachment portion is sewn to said predetermined part.

17. The extruded side curtain airbag ramp of claim 15, wherein the structural portion is formed of a polypropylene material and said structural portion adjoins to another portion of the airbag ramp that is thermoplastic olefin, said structural portion and another portion form a channel extending generally the length of the extruded side curtain airbag ramp.

18. The extruded side curtain airbag ramp of claim 15, wherein said at least one attachment portion is preferably connected to said predetermined part by sewing and/or at least one fastener extending through said attachment portion to said predetermined part.

19. An extruded airbag ramp for a vehicle, comprising: a plurality of materials that are co-extruded, wherein at least one of the materials has predetermined stiffness adapted for a structural portion of the airbag ramp operably to adjoin less stiff materials, and at least one of another of the materials is a tear-resistant material providing a plurality of attachment portions suitable to operably attach said extruded airbag ramp to another predetermined part of said vehicle.

20. The extruded airbag ramp of claim 19, wherein another of said plurality of materials is a softer material forming an arched ramp portion and a base portion of said extruded airbag ramp and adjoining both ends of the structural portion and adjoining each side of the plurality of attachment portions, wherein said arched ramp portion, base portion and structural portion forms a channel and the structural portion is adapted to provide stiffness that allows elimination of an expanse of material within the channel.
