GM and Teijin collaborate on carbon fibre

Teijin has developed an electric concept car with a body structure made entirely from carbon fibre reinforced thermoplastic.

NORTH AMERICAN car maker General Motors (GM) and Japanese carbon fibre producer Teijin Ltd have announced plans to co-develop carbon fibre composite technologies for use in high-volume GM vehicles.

The deal involves the use of Teijin's carbon fibre reinforced thermoplastic (CFRTP) technology, which is said to reduce the cycle times required for moulding composite products to less than 1 minute. Just prior to the announcement of the agreement with GM, Teijin unveiled plans to establish a ¥2 billion pilot plant based on this technology at its Matsuyama Factory in Ehime Prefecture, Japan. The plant is expected to operational in mid-2012.

To support the relationship with GM, Teijin says it will establish a composites technical centre in the northern part of the US in 2012.

The launch of any carbon fibre-intensive vehicle applications resulting from the relationship would be announced closer to market readiness, the companies say. The agreement does not involve an exchange of equity between the companies.

GM; www.gm.com
Teijin; www.teijin.co.jp

Ahlstrom closes US reinforcements plant

AHLSTROM CORPORATION, headquartered in Finland, has decided to close its glass fibre speciality reinforcements plant in Bishopville, USA, because of weakening demand in the North American wind energy industry.

74 employees will be affected by the closure, starting from January 2012.

Ahlstrom has also taken measures to improve the profitability of its Karhula and Mikkeli plants in Finland, where it manufactures glass fibre, speciality reinforcements and glass fibre tissue.

Co-operation negotiations started in September at the Mikkeli plant has led to 7 job losses. The production of glass fibre reinforcements at the site will continue as before.

These actions are part a profit improvement programme, which Ahlstrom concluded in December. Its objective was to increase annual operating profit by approximately €15 million from the year 2012. The programme has impacted a total of 362 employees at sites around the world.

Ahlstrom; www.ahlstrom.com

Airbus A350 XWB delay

AIRBUS HAS announced that the A380 XWB's entry into service has been rescheduled to the first half 2014 to ensure smooth production ramp-up capability.

The A350 XWB will be the first Airbus to be over 50% composite.

In late December the first A350 XWB parts arrived at the aircraft's Final Assembly Line in Toulouse, France. The 21 m long front fuselage section, delivered from Airbus in Saint-Nazaire, is destined to become part of the A350 XWB static test airframe.

Final assembly start of the first 'flyable' Airbus A350 XWB will follow in the second quarter 2012.

Airbus; www.airbus.com

The A350 XWB arrives at the Toulouse final assembly line. (Picture © Airbus S.A.S. 2011.)

SOFICAR becomes Toray subsidiary

JAPANESE GROUP Toray Industries Inc has purchased the remaining shares in carbon fibre manufacturer Société des Fibres de Carbone SA (SOFICAR) in France from Arkema, making it a wholly owned subsidiary of Toray.

Toray previously held a 70% stake in SOFICAR, and Arkema a 30% stake.

Toray says it is renaming SOFICAR as Toray Carbon Fibers Europe SA (CFE) in order to show its strong commitment to European customers.

SOFICAR was established in 1982 as a joint venture with Elf Aquitaine, with Toray holding a 35% stake. Since Toray increased its stake to 70% in 1988, SOFICAR has been expanding its business as the strategic base of Toray's carbon fibre composites business in Europe.

SOFICAR currently has carbon fibre production capacity of 5200 tons a year. Toray says it plans to further expand the business by installing new production lines for raw material fibre (precursor) and prepreg for aircraft applications in the future, as well expanding carbonisation capacity.

Toray currently operates three carbon fibre sites in Japan, France and the US, and a new plant will be opened in Korea in 2013.

SOFICAR; www.soficar-carbon.com
Toray; www.toray.com