

Hella, Behr and Plastic Omnium Form Front-End Module Joint Venture

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([PRWEB](#)) January 15, 2004 --Three major automotive suppliers -- Hella KG Hueck & Co., Behr GmbH and Plastic Omnium -- plan to form an equally-owned joint venture company to design, develop and produce automotive front-end modules.

Subject to regulatory approvals, the new company will begin operations early in 2004. Headquartered in Lippstadt, Germany, HBPO will have dedicated facilities at Plastic Omnium's international research and development center in Lyon, France.

Front-end modules are fully-equipped systems ready for installation on new-model assembly lines. Each module includes a structural frame on which can be fitted headlamps, auxiliary lights, engine-cooling and energy-absorption systems, air guides, electronic devices and hood latches, as well as various tanks, bumpers and other components.

Hella and Behr will transfer their Hella-Behr Fahrzeugsysteme GmbH joint venture to HBPO, which will have estimated annual sales this year of approximately 350-million euros. The new company will have 550 employees at eight production sites in Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, Mexico and South Korea. Current annual output of 1.25-million front-end modules will be increased to more than two million over the next two years.

HBPO will be the only company in the world exclusively dedicated to front-end modules. Each of the three partners is a leader in its respective business: Hella in lighting and electronics; Behr in air-conditioning and engine-cooling systems, and Plastic Omnium Auto Exterior in body parts and modules, as well as impact-absorption and pedestrian-protection systems.

"This unique set of competencies will allow HBPO to meet a variety of future challenges such as the integration of complex electronic driver-assistance systems and the realization of innovative technical solutions for increased pedestrian protection at the vehicle front-end," an HBPO spokesperson noted. "The joint venture company will be involved in design and development, supplier and quality management, logistics and the assembly of complex front-end modules at locations close to its customers."

About the partner companies:

Hella KG Hueck & Co., Lippstadt, Germany -- Hella is an automotive components manufacturer that develops and produces lighting, electronics, wiring and signal processing systems, as well as integrated front-end modules. It is also a global supplier of automotive spare parts. In fiscal 2002-2003, the Group reported sales of more than 3 billion euros. Its 61 manufacturing facilities, production subsidiaries and joint venture companies employ 22,800 people in 18 countries.

Behr GmbH & Co. KG, Stuttgart, Germany -- A specialist in vehicle air-conditioning and engine cooling systems, Behr is a leading original equipment manufacturer for passenger cars and commercial vehicles, with



2002 sales of 2.8 billion euros and 16,300 employees in 25 production facilities in Europe, North America, South America and Asia.

Plastic Omnium, Levallois, France -- Plastic Omnium is a manufacturing and services company with 9,200 employees in 25 countries on four continents, 66 production facilities and 14 research and development centers. In 2002, the company reported sales of 1.6 billion euros. Its Plastic Omnium Auto Exterior division is a world leader in exterior body parts and modules.

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