

Safe passage down the car assembly line

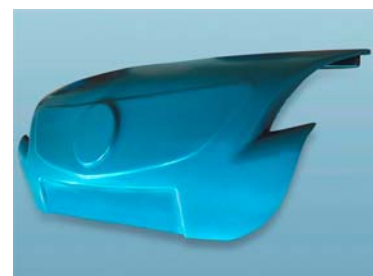
Car body protection panels made of polyolefin foam and foil by Sekisui Alveo protect the new Vauxhall Astra

Lucerne, 6th October 2009 – Starting in September vehicle cover panels made from Sekisui Alveos polyolefin foam and hard PP sheet have been protecting the new Vauxhall Astra in the British production plant. These Car Body Protection Panels prevent minor damage that can occur on the vehicle assembly line. The protection panel is made from a foil-foam laminate: The highly resistant foil reliably withstands heavy impact without being punctured, while the polyolefin foam Alveolit additionally absorbs energy. The various cover panels are made by AER Stafford precisely to the specified contours. Unique fixing points ensuring they cannot slip. This method ensures optimal protection of the exterior paintwork or sensitive interior surfaces from heavy or sharp-edged tools. The car body protection panels are reusable and are currently used by other automobile manufacturers.

The new high-tech panel is replacing traditional vehicle covers on production lines. “Our customers appreciate in particular the soft inner side made from foam that provides added protection for sensitive surfaces”, explains John Brogden, Technical Manager at AER Stafford. The company is one of the leading manufacturers of car body protection systems in Great Britain. The foam Alveolit used by Sekisui Alveo features a closed cell structure and two process skins. The enclosed air bubbles counteract compression of the soft foam. When a worker leans against the cover panel during the assembly process, for example, the foam does not fully compress, thus preventing the hard foil from coming in direct contact with the surface to be protected and damaging it. Thanks



The transparent foil allows for flexibility in the selection of the foam colour.



Optimal protection on the assembly line: The highly resistant foil reliably withstands heavy impact without being punctured, while the Alveolit polyolefin foam additionally absorbs energy.

to the two soft and fine process skins – unlike skived polyurethane foams, EPDM foams or polyolefin block foams – with Alveolit no dust can penetrate into the cells which could later cause scratches on contact with painted surfaces.

Besides the cross-linked polyolefin foam Alveolit, the laminate consists of a 2.5 millimetre thick transparent top layer. Sekisui Alveo thermally bonds the two components without the use of adhesive. The manufacturer of polyolefin foams supplies the entire laminate complex all from under one roof, thus reducing the workload and saving time for further processing companies such as AER Stafford. Thanks to the matched mechanical properties of the top layer and foam, the laminate is ideally suited for vacuum-forming processes. Even extremely complex contours can be made with ease. After vacuum moulding, the components are ground, milled or cut into shape.

"The majority of British automobile manufacturers uses our car body protection panels on the production line", explains John Brogden. Thomas Ross, Market Manager at Sekisui Alveo adds: "We are already working towards new markets such as in caravans, shipbuilding and the packaging industry. The protection panels open up endless application options for the entire assembly and logistics sector."

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Thanks to the matched mechanical properties of Sekisui Alveo's top layer and foam, even extremely complex contours can be made with ease.

Sekisui Alveo AG company portrait

Sekisui Alveo AG with head office in Lucerne, Switzerland, develops and produces cross-linked polyolefin foams, which are used in: Adhesive Coating, Automotive, Consumer Goods, Construction, General Converting and Footwear. The solutions are developed in close cooperation with processing companies and manufacturers, and tested and approved in the company's Application Services Laboratory. Sekisui Alveo is owned by Sekisui Chemical Co. Ltd., which, with its globally active subsidiaries, serves approximately 50% of the global market with cross-linked polyolefin foams.

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