



Press release

Curv[®] technology for unique lightweight strength in suitcases Samsonite Black Label X'Lite, the lightest and strongest Samsonite ever

Gronau, January 2007. The new X'Lite luggage collection, introduced under Samsonite's premium Black Label line, is utilising the self-reinforced Curv[®] composite manufactured by Propex Fabrics GmbH. The strength, formability and high impact resistance of this new high performance material has enabled Samsonite's design engineers to achieve unprecedented weight savings.

Curv[®] is a new concept in thermoplastic materials that bridges the gap between commodity plastics and traditional fibre-reinforced materials. Curv[®] is 'self reinforced' because it comprises high performance thermoplastic fibres in a matrix of exactly the same material. Curv[®] is 100% polypropylene, but yields stiffness and strength values around 5 times those of regular PP. In addition, Curv[®] has a high strain to failure which in combination with good tensile strength offers tremendously high impact resistance, even at temperatures as low as -189 degrees Celsius!

These specific material characteristics, combined with its low density allow for very significant weight savings in final products. In the case of the Samsonite Black Label X'Lite suitcase shell it was possible to save nearly 50% in weight compared to Samsonite Polycarbonate cases.



"REVOLUTION"

"Curv[®] is nothing less than a revolution for our market", says Arno de Taeye, Vice President Customer Services Europe and Global Supply Hardside. "It is a magnificent new material for all those applications where impact resistance and lightweight play a key role." Another advantage of the material lies in its attractive optical appearance and the extensive design possibilities. The X'Lite collection is currently available in the colours black and silver and can be bought in Samsonite Black Label Stores and retailers world-wide as well as on the Internet (USA only).



'SELECTIVE MELTING'

The heart of the CURV[®] patented technology is called 'selective melting', where highly drawn fibres are submitted to carefully controlled temperature and pressure conditions so that a thin layer from the skin of each individual fibre is melted, then recrystallised to form a matrix. Most importantly, a very high proportion of the original fibre properties are maintained in the 100% polypropylene sheet, which shows stiffness and strength more commonly associated with traditional fibre-reinforced composites, but has the added benefit of exceptionally high resistance to impact (surprisingly maintained down to cryogenic temperatures).

MORE SAMSONITE CURV[®] APPLICATIONS TO COME

The Samsonite Black Label X'Lite collection is the first, but certainly not the last range of suitcases that Samsonite plans to bring to the market place. The company has invested significant time and money in R&D around this new material and obviously has become a true expert in the compression moulding of

Curv®. "There is a bright future for these kind of materials within Samsonite and we are already planning the next suitcase collection made from Curv®", says Arno de Taeye

Curv® is not just being used for luggage. Other application areas today include sport equipment, automotive parts (interior & exterior), personal protection products, transportation cases, etc. Also, Curv® is used as a skin material in light-weight sandwich structures, usually in combination with thermoplastic core materials. Curv® can be supplied on roll or as a sheet in thicknesses from 0.3 up to 3.6 mm, maximum width of 1360 mm and any length.

PROPEX FABRICS

Curv® is manufactured by Propex Fabrics GmbH (www.propexinc.com), a 100% subsidiary of Propex Inc., a leading producer of synthetic fabrics throughout the world. The company, headquartered in Chattanooga (USA) is the world's number one producer of primary carpet backing and secondary carpet backing and is also a leading producer of geotextiles, synthetic fabrics for use in furniture, bedding, automotive and other industrial fabrics applications. The company employs nearly 4000 people and has manufacturing facilities in the USA as well as in Brazil, Germany, Hungary and Mexico.

In 2002, the company started up the first commercial plant for the Curv® self-reinforced PP composite at the site of Propex Fabrics GmbH in Gronau, Germany. Curv® is produced in a fully integrated operation from tape extrusion and weaving through to final composite sheet production. There is also a technical centre, which includes a wide range of facilities for continued product development.

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