

# News Release

March 18, 2026

## **International Color Day: When automotive color meets performance, protection and sustainability**

- **Color significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions, vehicle longevity and brand identity**
- **Creating, protecting and preserving automotive colors combines emotional design and materials science**
- **BASF Coatings develops more than 1,300 color concepts every year**

Automotive color is where emotional design meets materials science. It influences brand identity, purchase decisions, safety perception and even sustainability. In anticipation of International Color Day on March 21, BASF Coatings is highlighting the crucial role color plays in automotive design, manufacturing and repair. Far beyond aesthetics, automotive color is a complex, data-driven, and technically precise discipline that requires profound knowledge substrate pre-treatment, the development of different layers that build the final coating and the skill to exactly replicate the status quo of a color shade even years after its application.

### **Protecting color from the very first layer**

With decades of expertise in color innovation, BASF Coatings is well-positioned to create, protect and preserve automotive color across the full lifecycle of a vehicle. When car owners talk about the color of their car, they usually refer to the visible, colorful basecoat only. But to make a color shine, it takes way more than just the pigmentation. BASF Coatings' integrated approach ensures that vehicles also adhere to stringent durability and sustainability standards such as corrosion protection.

“Pretreatment is the invisible enabler behind durable, sustainable automotive coatings. By offering tailored pretreatment solutions for modern automotive substrates, we create the chemical foundation for corrosion resistance and robust paint adhesion. This first process step is decisive for the long-term performance, durability and sustainability of the entire coating system and the basis to make every color shine,” said Meike Flöck, Head of Global Segment Management Automotive OEM Surface Treatment.

### **Designing automotive colors for performance and with responsible material choices**

The diversity of today’s automotive colors is driven by the precise interplay of pigments and effect materials that give each basecoat its distinctive character. At BASF Coatings, this expertise is combined with close collaboration between the global Color Design team and automotive manufacturers, enabling innovative color solutions that meet high performance standards while allowing the integration of more responsible material choices where feasible.

This approach has recently been recognized by leading design and technology institutions. The trend color REVERENCE DARKNESS of BASF Coatings received the MATERIALICA Design and Technology Award 2025, honoring its use of recycled tire materials as a carbon black source. In parallel, BASF Coatings was nominated as a finalist for the German Ecodesign Award 2025 with its project “Colors with Renewable Pigments”, demonstrating how bio-based waste streams can be transformed into expressive colors without compromising durability or production reliability. The German Ecodesign Award is Germany’s highest state award for ecological design.

“Colors play a vital role in how consumers connect with a vehicle. Across all regions, we see a clear desire for more individual, expressive color identities, and growing interest in color solutions that incorporate responsible material choices,” said Mark Gutjahr, global head of Automotive Color Design at BASF Coatings. “As color designers, our task is to translate cultural signals, technological advances, and emotional needs into colors that not only look compelling, but also perform reliably in industrial production over a long period of time. Together with our customers, we develop more than 1,300 color concepts each year and have around 450

commercialized.”

### **Preserving color authenticity throughout a vehicle’s lifecycle**

Once a vehicle is in use, maintaining color authenticity becomes a key factor for its long-term and sustainable lifecycle. Today’s coatings include functions such as UV protection that prevent colors from fading when exposed to sunlight. “In automotive refinish, we approach color as a dynamic and evolving element. Every vehicle shade is defined by countless subtle differences that emerge over time, across different repair situations and with varied materials. Our strength is in capturing and digitally replicating these unique nuances, ensuring that body shops can achieve an authentic color match and restore vehicles to their original appearance – even years after the car first left the factory,” said Jane Niemi, Head of Global Marketing.

When it comes to restoring vehicles to their original condition, matching the current color shade after a repair job or even an entire recolorization, BASF Coatings provides an online database that gives detailed information on millions of colors and the correct mixing formulas of cars from around the world. Professional body shops benefit from exact color data and a state-of-the-art portfolio of high-quality refinish paint products which exactly match OEM requirements.

Automotive color is a complex discipline and guiding customers through that complexity has long been part of BASF Coatings’ DNA. As the company enters a new chapter under Carlyle’s ownership in Q2 2026, it is strengthening its technical expertise, investing in its people and deepening its passion for color, ensuring it remains a reliable and forward-thinking partner across the entire automotive value chain.

### **About BASF Coatings**

BASF Coatings is a global expert in the development, production and marketing of innovative and sustainable automotive OEM and refinish coatings as well as applied surface treatments for metal, plastic and glass substrates in a wide range of industries. We create advanced performance solutions and drive performance, design and new applications to meet our partners’ needs all over the world. We share skills, knowledge and resources of interdisciplinary and global teams for the benefit of customers by operating a collaborative network of sites in Europe, South America, Middle East, Africa, North America and Asia Pacific. In 2025, our businesses achieved global sales of about €3.7 billion.

BASF Coatings – Driven by passion and science, we always go beyond the surface. For more information, visit [www.basf-coatings.com](http://www.basf-coatings.com) and [follow us on LinkedIn](#).

### **About BASF**

At BASF, we create chemistry for a sustainable future. Our ambition: We want to be the preferred chemical company to enable our customers' green transformation. We combine economic success with environmental protection and social responsibility. Around 108,000 employees in the BASF Group contribute to the success of our customers in nearly all sectors and almost every country in the world. Our portfolio comprises, as core businesses, the segments Chemicals, Materials, Industrial Solutions, and Nutrition & Care; our standalone businesses are bundled in the segments Surface Technologies and Agricultural Solutions. BASF generated sales of €60 billion in 2025. BASF shares are traded on the stock exchange in Frankfurt (BAS) and as American Depositary Receipts (BASFY) in the United States. Further information at [www.basf.com](http://www.basf.com).