

The Chain Gang

BMW F650 Discussions

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Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417288)

by **TJ Willy** on August 14th, 2008, 4:56 pm

RB. Bad deal indeed. Glad you bounced up with only a gimp arm! Amazing the punishment our bodies can really take. Needless to say, this cat will be checking his forks now! I have an 03 so I am in limbo as to what "version" forks I have.

Most likely - same as yours.

Frankly, I am glad you posted up the videos etc... others WILL learn (like me) that way.

Again.... glad you made it out ok and had good people around to watch over you. I hope you stick around here and post up often, your adventures.

Good luck with your case. Look forward to hearing about your updates!

WELCOME!

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417297)

by **SenorPeligro** on August 14th, 2008, 6:31 pm

Ricemannv wrote: Or you could get through that terrain on a stock bike by just slowing down and riding smart. A stock F650 can get through alot of terrain, but a Dakar-Paris Rallye bike it is not.

This is very true. Having just watched Race to Dakar for the umpteenth time I am totally fascinated by the conversion. The suspension on those bikes is incredible. Compare and contrast the legs on our F650GS to the KTM 690 Enduro or to the Baja-babe H*nda XR650L....

The stock plastic on the GS just isn't up to the job of even even easy off-roading and will crack and flap about at the earliest chance. Stripped down a little, with better suspension... then the bike starts to rock but it's no KTM off-road. On the other hand... how many of those make it around the world?

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417383)

by **kwh** on August 15th, 2008, 4:16 am

I'm in agreement here. I've heard of forks being replaced for a lot less reasons, than an endo. I'm sorry for the accident but laying this at the feet of BMW seems like a stretch to me.

I'm sorry, that does not compute. Firstly there was no endo, the bike lowsided on mud, the back came round and it then high-sided and rolled. Apart from the fact that a couple of the non-standard bolts used to secure the bars to the top-yoke via a set of aftermarket bar-risers sheared, the damage was all cosmetic and consisted of an indicator lens and a fairing stay biting the dust. There was no visible damage to the bars, the controls, the lock-stops, the tank, the screen, or more relevantly, the wheel, the brake calipers, the ABS sensor, or any part of the forks.

If there had been an endo, with sufficient energy in it to do the damage alleged, the wheel would no doubt have been jammed against the engine and the forks would have been bent like pretzels.

I've certainly seen rims dented by hitting big potholes, on the street and on the trail, I've seen fork-seals blown by similar big impacts, I've seen sliders bent, disks dished and all sorts of unpleasantness afflict front suspension in collisions as well. I have never yet seen the part of the forks that are supposed to be the strongest, most robust suffer completely invisible damage that later causes a potentially fatal and catastrophic collapse while traversing a smooth paved highway 5,000 miles later. I've certainly never seen that occur in forks where all the far flimsier components surrounding the point of failure have been entirely undamaged.

I don't know who you would like to blame.

If this had been the first ever recorded case of a failure of this type, you could shrug and say 'bad luck' and say that maybe Showa had a quality control failure that day. But we learn that there have been a dozen amongst English speaking internet users who were in a fit state to and motivated to post about their experiences after the fact in places that Google reaches; that's surely a small subset of a statistically significant number, some of whom are bound to have died.

If nobody had told BMW then we could absolve them of any direct culpability for allowing this to continue, if they were unaware - but we know that BMW have redesigned the offending components by beefing them up, which means they knew all about it.

If Red-Baroness had ridden to Canada on a bike with bent forks or a warped wheel then you could call her suicidally reckless, but she didn't.

If Red-Baroness had damaged the front suspension and then chosen not to replace suspect components because they looked OK you could call her at best imprudent, although even then I would say that without BMW publishing the information that sudden catastrophic failure in an undamaged looking suspension component was a possibility after an impact she should not be criticised, but again in fact she did not do this.

If the BMW dealer who inspected the bike after the accident had ignored a visible crack or the wheels being out of line or something then you could blame them, but we know that that they did neither of those things.

So, are you sure it is her fault that her motorcycle structurally failed underneath?

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417388)

by **kwh** on August 15th, 2008, 4:40 am

*bigb wrote:*I am all for consumers rights and especially motorcycles and even more for F650 riders; but riding the bike off road kind of takes all bets off the table. Its like trying to find a used front mag wheel for a H*nda F2: there are relatively few, and those are bent. Your forks take an innordinate beating offroad, even if you are light. And you lead the pack off road? HmMMM. How many of your mishaps are documented on the web?

Best of luck, but I would not expend a great wager. Be very thankful you are not handicapped or dead. Just all of your photo history on the web is not real good either. But I sincerely wish you the best of luck. If you did win, there are thousands of off-road motorcycle and atv riders who may immediately bankrupt the vehicle industry (as if it needs any help with its swift decision making).

HOWEVER, I believe you are RIGHT! And you are a Baroness, so...?
I hope you are feeling better soon.

If I was Red-Baroness I think I'd be extremely angry about this posting. And not only about the sneering and condescending tone or the gratuitous and unwarranted digs, either.

If it is your genuine belief that anybody who rides a dual-sport motorcycle offroad should expect at some point many thousands of miles later to be killed by invisible damage causing sudden unprovoked catastrophic collapse of their front forks, I'm here to tell you that you are unlikely to find many people who share your view. Anywhere.

If it is your genuine belief that any rider who has fallen off a motorcycle on a racetrack, and has also fallen off a motorcycle while riding it offroad in a dual-sport rally, is somehow therefore more culpable when their motorcyle suddenly catastrophically collapses and pitches them up the road, then again you are unlikely to find many people who share your view. Anywhere. Especially amongst the many riders who have crashed on the track and/or offroad a great many times.

In fact, I'm not sure that either of the above really are your genuine belief, but I find it hard to come up with a more creditable explanation of why you would post this.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417407)

by **bigb** on August 15th, 2008, 6:05 am

lol

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417411)

by **mothra** on August 15th, 2008, 6:12 am

Kwh you sound like a lawyer.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417412)

by **bigb** on August 15th, 2008, 6:16 am

*mothra wrote:*Kwh you sound like a lawyer.

Quite possibly a hungry lawyer, that hopefully works on commissions exclusively.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417425)

by **redbaroness** on August 15th, 2008, 7:11 am

*kwh wrote:*If I was Red-Baroness I think I'd be extremely angry about this posting. And not only about the sneering and condescending tone or the gratuitous and unwarranted digs, either.

The day I get mad at what some twit on the internet says, please shoot me.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417429)

by **kwh** on August 15th, 2008, 7:25 am

No, I'm not a lawyer. But I don't like the idea of one of my friends, or myself come to that, being smeared all up a road somewhere due to a congenital design fault in a product that a breathtakingly cynical manufacturer is obviously aware of, but decides they can get away with not fixing because nobody has called them on it yet. Do you? Seriously? Do you really want to rely on the power of denial to stop your forks collapsing on you next time you ride your bike and hurling you under a truck? Is a 1% chance that your forks will just suddenly collapse and probably kill you acceptable? Is it a 0.5% chance perhaps? Or is a 0.1% chance OK for you? Or do you think BMW should be forced to do what they are required to do by law anyway, which is liaise with VOSA (in the UK) and the NHTSA in the US and probably the TUV in Germany etc etc and organise a formal recall to replace whatever the potentially defective components are?

Equally importantly, they've done it with R-series wheels in the past, they would appear to be doing it with F-series front forks, what will they do it with next?

Now, you might think that "Yeah, we took your money, then we knowingly played russian roulette with you and almost killed you, but nobody has any proof (yet) so suck it up!" is a fine sentiment for a corporation to express.

But I don't.

YMMV.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417431)

by **GSLite** on August 15th, 2008, 7:36 am

*redbaroness wrote:*The day I get mad at what some twit on the internet says, please shoot me.

This needs to be printed on t-shirts. Sell the shirts and use the proceeds to pay for medical costs and a new bike

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417433)

by **DaKook** on August 15th, 2008, 7:42 am

It's all speculation at this point. I would think that a Metallurgical examination may be able to tell if the forks failed due to an original defect in the manufacturing process or if other stress (accidents) caused or contributed to it.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417437)

by **kwh** on August 15th, 2008, 7:58 am

*DaKook wrote:*It's all speculation at this point. I would think that a Metallurgical examination may be able to tell if the forks failed due to an original defect in the manufacturing process or if other stress (accidents) caused or contributed to it.

Yes, absolutely. All I can go on at the moment is what the photos show. Prima-Facie, it's a complete shocker though, and BMW Motorrad need beating about the head with an F650 fork assembly until they get the message....

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417438)

by **SScratch** on August 15th, 2008, 8:01 am

My testing for the structural failure limits of the F650 continues.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417449)

by **tmotten** on August 15th, 2008, 8:57 am

I'm with kwh. You shouldn't have to check for stress cracks. Most likely you wouldn't be able to find stuff like that anyway, and if we ever get to the point where that is becoming part of the pre-ride check, I'm ready to give it up all together.

Personally I get pissed off everytime fellow engineers direct me to get things out the door with a 'she'll be right the risk is tiny' attitude. I like to nut it out till the last details and then assess. Luckily in my industry is doesn't happen all the time, and some companies are better than others. But you'd be amazed.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417462)

by **Ricemannv** on August 15th, 2008, 10:37 am

What if you have a sudden and catastrophic failure of your front tire tube that leads to you crashing? Can we parlay that into a lawsuit as well???

Riceman

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