

The Chain Gang

BMW F650 Discussions

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Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417500)

by **bigb** on August 15th, 2008, 3:06 pm

BMW could be covering up defects. They have a history of doing that like all oem manufacturers. The AL casting process all comes down to a couple of seconds when the casting is solidified. Its a black-art process with assuming this is gravity fed and not vacuum filled technology: which I can only assume is similar, but maybe more reliable.

If this is the only proposed defect of this type, it would seem likely it is undetermined without evidence who is at fault. Analyze the friggin fork pieces metallurgically, and then worry about witnesses describing how many flips you did in the air. Does bad-mouthing anyone who offers counterviews upon your chances make your case with a bullied consensus of a web site? A judge won't think so, and most likely neither will a jury. Scowling at the jury might be worth trying though.

Speculation based on BMW having xray vision of 100% of its vendors parts is not a homerun defense IF the forks even have verifiable evidence of process anomalies. Let's see, didn't the rider have the same defense? But we have no evidence of what the forks looked like before the incident to my knowledge.

1. If metallurgical evidence is found of a defect and you are the only one, they will cover your insurance at least.

2. IF NO metallurgical defects are found, then it would point to physically forcing the defect. over time, wrecks, and rythmic vibration forces. Like soldiers marching over a bridge in cadence can tear them down (easily), dynamic forces in rythmic waves sometimes exaggerates forces well beyond static limits most could imagine. For example hot dogging on dirt roads for miles, hitting repeated ditches & large rocks beneath soft mud, occasionally wrecking, alternating with smoother high speed road vibrations (to sample the whole range of vibrations to find 'that' single resonance that 'tears the bridge down'), and then cracking an AL casting once the cracks have time to vibrate material away. Its logical to me as a feasible scenario, crack off road unnatural forces wrecking, and then the high speed finer vibrations start cracking the forks away from the axle. Every time I stop, I always look at my tires, and HOPE I'd notice cracks starting, since they should have been noticed hundreds of miles before a total break (but that's speculation).

Without the metallurgical evidence, when did the cracks appear? Prove it. It does sound like wear and tear. I am not saying off road riders are not exempt from claiming repetitive defects, but off-roading is considered racing duty and not covered under most warranties. If BMW does, claim your warranty. But without:

1. repeated similar accidents and/or

2. metallurgical evidence:

all the rationalizing and badmouthing others with alternative scenarios (not necessarily viewpoints) is just sour-grapes lip-service.

Regards,
Twit

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417525)

by **GS George** on August 15th, 2008, 7:55 pm

i will reluctantly add my two cents to this topic. although i have not been involved on this forum as long as many people i have been around long enough and read it frequently enough to know that this is the only time i have ever heard of this problem. if this was a common problem it would have been highly talked about and publisized here. go take a look at the ADV site and see how many drive line failures the big GS's have, now that is a problem being ignored by BMW. i honestly feel bad that this happened but i do not believe it is a problem with BMW or a QC issue but rather a single, isolated incident, which i will not speculate on the cause of.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417530)

by **maddog** on August 15th, 2008, 8:42 pm

mothra wrote: So you are saying that McDonald's coffee is defective for being hot? Sometimes I wish I was Canadian.

Actually, the case in question was heard because the plaitiff (an elderly woman) suffered **third degree burns** to her genitals and legs from the coffee.

Question for you mothra: how hot is your morning cup?

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417533)

by **maddog** on August 15th, 2008, 9:22 pm

*Ricemannv wrote:*I find it difficult to believe that BMW would knowingly leave a product out on the market that has the potential to kill hundreds of their customers from a known manufacturing problem.

Oh yes, who would expect a multi-national corporation making millions/billions of dollars per year to put profit in front of safety?

That's like suggesting that Union Carbide may have had some safety problems in Bhopal, India, but they just kept right on truckin'. Or that Ford Motor Co. may have known that the Pinto (and more recently, the Crown Victoria) had a tendency to explode after a minor rear-end collision, but they kept on selling. Or that the owner of the vermiculite mines in Libby, Montana, may have had an interest in keeping the risk of asbestos quiet, and just kept on contaminating the entire region. Or that many manufacturers prefer to relocate their factories out of the USA and Europe, to places with lax safety and environmental laws, just to make more profit.

Next you're going to tell me that Philip Morris knew that cigarettes might cause cancer as much as 60 years ago, and then spent hundreds of millions of dollars on pseudo-science and political lobbying to keep on selling, all while covering up the truth, and researching new and improved ways to sell their product to an ever-younger audience. Such that they didn't actually admit that they had PROOF that their product kills people until the last 10 years or so. That they knew they were selling a product which killed their customers, but denied it all along. Please tell me that's not true. Not Philip Morris!

Why do you think that industry employs SO MANY LAWYERS? I mean, it's almost like covering up safety defects might increase profits!

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417540)

by **kwh** on August 15th, 2008, 10:10 pm

nytrashman wrote: i will reluctantly add my two cents to this topic. although i have not been involved on this forum as long as many people i have been around long enough and read it frequently enough to know that this is the only time i have ever heard of this problem. if this was a common problem it would have been highly talked about and publicized here. go take a look at the ADV site and see how many drive line failures the big GS's have, now that is a problem being ignored by BMW. i honestly feel bad that this happened but i do not believe it is a problem with BMW or a QC issue but rather a single, isolated incident, which i will not speculate on the cause of.

Well, we know it's not 'common' because there are thousands of F650GS machines out there being ridden all round the world, in some cases literally, and people aren't being pitched under trucks on a weekly basis. If it was 'common' then we wouldn't be having this discussion because a) the problem would have been spotted during testing and addressed, and b) if it had got into the wild there would have been a recall very quickly indeed as the bodycount soared.

But we also know that it isn't 'an isolated incident' because there are enough documented cases of this happening out there in similar circumstances that a casual search of the english speaking internet picks up ten or so. Factor in all the reasons why an incident like this might not appear on the english speaking internet and make some working statistical assumptions and that would mean that maybe (and this is not a huge reach) this has happened to 50 or 100 people. And that would exclude all the people who somehow caught the problem before it pitched them up the road, or who had a crash for other reasons that made the resulting or failure of their forks an irrelevant aside in the scheme of things.

We also know that BMW suddenly upped and decided to redesign and strengthen just the specific areas of the front fork castings which have failed in these cases to make it visibly and obviously stronger. Is it remotely credible that they just randomly decided to do that for aesthetic reasons? Or that they were bored in the design office one day? If you work back from when that change appeared in production (June 2003) to when they must have started researching the issue and then working on the solution, given that the F650GS was first produced in 1999 and first got out into the wild in numbers in Y2K, there really wouldn't have been the number of incidents to inform their decisions that there now have been. But they would undoubtedly have been a lot better informed about what incidents there had been than we are now. And unless you can furnish an alternative credible explanation for what they did to the design of that specific area of the forks, it does surely indicate that there actually was a problem, that it wasn't solely a production problem or a materials problem (because if it was solely a production or materials problem, why alter the design?) and that BMW identified it and promptly redesigned a part to solve the problem for new purchasers.

So how statistically significant is this failure rate? How likely is it to happen to you? Let's be conservative. Let's assume that my lower range assumption that fifty people have been hurled down the road by collapsing front forks on the pre-June-2003 BMW F650GS is accurate. I've found it hard to find F650GS worldwide sales numbers but I did find the following unreferenced statement on the internet...

"Between 1995 and 2003, BMW has sold more than 110,000 F 650s".

OK, I would think that that includes all the pre-GS Aprilia built bikes, and a percentage of post-fix BMW F650GS machines as well. Let us again be conservative

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417541)

by **kwh** on August 15th, 2008, 10:34 pm

mothra wrote:

So you are saying that McDonald's coffee is defective for being hot? Sometimes I wish I was Canadian.

If RedBaroness was even speaking to lawyers about BMW because she got food poisoning from her tyres and was complaining that there wasn't a sign on the tank saying 'do not eat this motorcycle' then you might have a point.

If RedBaroness had ridden into the scenery and banged herself up and then wanted to sue BMW for not telling her that bad things could happen on a motorcycle if she screwed up, then you would also have a point.

However, in this case it seems that she got tossed down the road because BMW screwed up, which happens, and have since compounded the error by keeping quiet and hoping nobody notices...

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417557)

by **kwh** on August 16th, 2008, 3:55 am

maddog wrote: I mean, it's almost like covering up safety defects might increase profits!

No way, dude... you are destroying my faith in the inherent morality of shareholder owned corporations...

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417586)

by **SS in Vzla.** on August 16th, 2008, 9:24 am

chichimo wrote: In many of the 3rd world nations I have traveled in, consumer rights are while heard of, are in fact for the most part non existence, yet the consumers of those countries long for just the most basic of these rights. .

Living and making bussiness in a Thirld World Country I can only say

+ 1

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417599)

by **Ricemannv** on August 16th, 2008, 11:22 am

kwh wrote: Well, we know it's not 'common' because there are thousands of F650GS machines out there being ridden all round the world, in some cases literally, and people aren't being pitched under trucks on a weekly basis. If it was 'common' then we wouldn't be having this discussion because a) the problem would have been spotted during testing and addressed, and b) if it had got into the wild there would have been a recall very quickly indeed as the bodycount soared.

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OK, I would think that that includes all the pre-GS Aprilia built bikes, and a percentage of post-fix BMW F650GS machines as well. Let us again be conservative and assume that as many as 35% or so of those bikes were early F650GS production, then. This is just to get a feel for the risk, you understand, so as long as we are in the ballpark, that's good enough to give us a feel. I suspect that the real figure is less than 30%, but never mind, 35% gives us a (rounded up) population of early F650GS machines of 40,000 or so.

So out of an assumed 40,000 early F650GS machines released into the wild worldwide, a documented 10 (but an assumed 50) will have already had their front forks structurally collapse while they were being ridden and thrown their owners down the road.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417607)

by **wontco** on August 16th, 2008, 12:16 pm

I'm starting to wonder if there's a Tagalog word for "Troll"

edit: Hey, no fair. You edited your vitriol *after* my surly sarcasm.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417652)

by **jsanford** on August 16th, 2008, 4:46 pm

Ricemannv wrote: Can I add my comments? Thanks!

You should slow down a little bit and not push the bike so hard. I do think BMW is at fault with their marketing of these bikes. They put it out there that these bikes can go anywhere, like they are ready for the Paris-Dakar race right out the dealer's door. It is not so. That and there sometimes seems to be a great emphasis on riding fast. Especially in group rides. I don't think you will win any case with that angle either though.

We've read of other failures on 650s on this site--the rear air shock on the G-bikes and the STs, etc.--and I don't recall anyone EVER telling the rider that it's their fault for riding the bike too hard and that she should just slow down.

Maybe you should advise [Lisa Thomas](http://www.2ridetheworld.com/) that she just got lucky with the 105,000 miles she put on her GS. And [Benka Pulko](http://www.benkapulko.com/eng/) was just hanging by a thread on her round the world trip on her Classic. I'm sure our Bluepoo is also taking note and slowing down to a sub-stately pace on her travels.

And frankly, I don't seem to remember Red Baroness asking for our advice on what's her best course of action in the first place.

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417668)

by **kwh** on August 17th, 2008, 2:07 am

Absolutely... "You..... You've been.... You've been *RIDING* this motorcycle, haven't you! No *wonder* it fell apart and pitched you down the road, you stupid woman!"

With reference to the bizarre suggestion that the NHTSA case that Red Baroness has now raised is somehow frivolous, here's an interesting counterpoint, also from the NHTSA, today...

http://thekneeslider.com/archives/2008/08/16/2008-H*rley-D*vidson-flh-recall/
(http://thekneeslider.com/archives/2008/08/16/2008-H*rley-D*vidson-flh-recall/)

Manufacturer: H*rley D*vidson

Model Year: 2008

Models affected: FLHP, FLHPE, FLHR, FLHRC, FLHRSE4, FLHT, FLHTC, FLHTCU, FLHTCUSE3, FLHTP, FLHX, AND FLTR

NHTSA Campaign Number: 08V357000

Potential Units Affected: 47579

Problem: H*rley D*vidson is recalling 47,579 model year 2008 FLHP, FLHPE, FLHR, FLHRC, FLHRSE4, FLHT, FLHTC, FLHTCU, FLHTCUSE3, FLHTP, FLHX and FLTR motorcycles. These motorcycles may experience a cracking of the fuel filter shell leading to loss of fuel pressure. This loss of fuel pressure can cause diminished performance and, in some cases, may cause an engine stall or a no-start condition. This condition could lead to a crash which could cause injury or death to the rider.

Corrective Action: Dealers will replace the fuel filter shell free of charge. The recall was to begin on or before August 4, 2008. Owners may contact H*rley D*vidson at 1-414-343-4056.

So it's a safety recall because if this fuel filter cracks, the bike might run like crap* and you might be merging onto the freeway at the time and get run over. Might, but very probably won't. In 99.9% of cases you'll get the hog off its trailer when you get to Sturgis and it won't start. Or you'll be stranded at the side of some highway between bars, and be too drunk to walk home or something.

If you agree (and more importantly, if HD and the NHTSA agree) that this fuel filter issue should be an urgent safety recall managed by the NHTSA, given the presumably small chance that this filter will crack, and then if it does, the vanishingly smaller chance that it will occur at a moment where it is likely to cause an accident, then what should the NHTSA make of a similar number** of bikes where at least one in eight hundred of them is likely to fall apart in motion and toss its rider down the road?

Is it relevant to the different approaches exhibited here that to fix the HD issue is probably five minutes of workshop time with a screwdriver and a 50 cent replacement filter, offset by the chance to sell the rider high-markup aftershave etc while he or she waits, whereas a BMW recall would be half a day in the workshop with a \$200 set of fork components and with no BMW branded aftershave to sell?

Answer: Probably to BMW. But it shouldn't be an issue for the NHTSA.

*[Edit:] It's a H*rley... how on earth would you tell, anyway?

**[Edit] Worldwide, of course. The Harleys will be mostly in the US, the F650GS is presumably mostly in Europe, with rather fewer under NHTSA jurisdiction, but a recall like this would have to be world wide - I doubt that anybody even in the least

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417725)

by **Ricemannv** on August 17th, 2008, 11:37 am

I'll check back in a year and see how much progress you have made on this issue. In the meantime, you can call off the dogs and stop sending me hate mail. Thanks.

Riceman

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417942)

by **maddog** on August 18th, 2008, 6:19 pm

I am going to contact a friend of mine who works at the metallurgical laboratory at (nearby University/National Technical Lab). He is working on a thesis there.

I am going to see if he wants to take my pre-2003 slider tube, which is clearly out of true and IMO was causing me no end of trouble, and scan it for me. This doesn't obviously apply 1:1 with RedB's catastrophic failure...but now I am curious to see if the 2002 part which was redesigned has any issues when inspected by an expert.

If I get this favor done, I will post whatever type of results he can give me. Let's see...may be interesting?

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Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417948)

by **kwh** on August 18th, 2008, 8:31 pm

If the results turn out to be interesting to him/you, I wonder whether he might also be interested in looking at some of RedBaronesses broken front suspension parts as well to see if he can shed any light on what happened and whether it is related? My understanding is that your F650GS hadn't ever done anything that would give anybody cause to say "It must have been because you/the bike did 'x'".

Cheers!

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