

# The Chain Gang

BMW F650 Discussions

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## Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417954)**

by **maddog** on August 19th, 2008, 12:32 am

*kwh wrote:*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!

I shall ask him about his interest/ability to do this work...certainly I would like to lead up to that.

As far as I know, my bike has not suffered any accidents beyond me accidentally dropping it in Oslo while it was parked. The front wheel is a bit out of true, and I am second owner.

Thing is, as I mentioned earlier in this thread, I had tons of trouble with seals going and when I inspected the thing, it was noticeably not straight. Strange for an item like that, to be sure. So I just bought a new slider, checked that it appeared straight, and then threw it on. No further troubles.

As I say, I'll see if he is able to get the equipment for a personal project like this...I'm sure he would be very interested, more a matter of getting the needed permission. I'll be back to this...

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417956)**

by **ThorH** on August 19th, 2008, 12:55 am

*maddog wrote:* Actually, the case in question was heard because the plaintiff (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?

Thank you for not dipping your dick in your morning coffee while visiting.

Last edited by [ThorH](#) ([./memberlist.php?mode=viewprofile&u=20581](#)) on August 19th, 2008, 7:38 am, edited 1 time in total.

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417962)**

by **mothra** on August 19th, 2008, 2:09 am

*maddog wrote:*

*mothra wrote:* Actually, the case in question was heard because the plaintiff (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?

Not relevant because whether your coffee is hot (1st degree burns) or really freaking hot (3rd degree burns) between your legs is the wrong place to put the cup of known hot liquid with the pop of lid.

It is possible that the BMW forks have a manufacturing defect and in which case BMW should resolve the problem. But it is much more likely that it was a chance event based on a chance event on this one bike that led to the eventual failure and crash.

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p417963)**

by **mothra** on August 19th, 2008, 2:10 am

*ThorH wrote:*

*maddog wrote:* Actually, the case in question was heard because the plaintiff (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?

Thank you for not dipping your dick in your morning coffee while visiting.

I was under the impression that coffee was for drinking and not to.....

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418033)**

by **haakon** on August 19th, 2008, 11:33 am

If you want to discuss coffee...boiling hot- hot- warm- lunkewarm, tepid or icy cold..... start another thread.

Maybe it does have SOME relevance to the general trend of suing in the US.. for whatever reason..

To have your front wheel just "fall off" is NOT the same as spilling your coffee? or is it??

-----

I am real happy the Baroness was not killed or seriously injured.

Im REAL happy she got the energy to try fight BMW on this issue. It IS serious and I think it can only be brought to court in the US.

(not the same but related: I know of 8 or 9 F650GS owners that have had their bikes totalled because the wiring harness had a shortcircuit and started burning. All the shorts were at the exact same location..... where the wiring is ziptied to a bracket just under the rear shock adjuster. The worst case was a 1 year old GS... The fire started about an hour or two ATER he parked his bike... totalled, and BMW refuse all sorts of compensation... blaming it on him substituting the original fuses with larger (heavier)ones---- the wires that short circuit is from the generator to the battery..... and no fuses there....)

BMW does not accept ANY design or wiring fault at all.

If this happened in the US AND someone brought it to court maybe they had to accept there was a design miss and let the unfortunate ones have their bikes repaired for free... maybe?

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418037)**

by **jsanford** on August 19th, 2008, 11:48 am

*mothra wrote:*

*ThorH wrote:*

*maddog wrote:* 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?

Thank you for notting dipping your dick in your morning coffee while visiting.

I was under the impression that coffe was for drinking and not to.....

Gives new meaning to "Americano" coffee (as in American Pie).

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418070)**

by **haakon** on August 19th, 2008, 1:37 pm

AAAAaaaaaaw- I succumb and give in.... go on with the coffe.. im OFF.....  
(dont feel comfortable thinking of elderly "girls" and what boiling hot coffee -----  
JEEEEZEEEE I spilled REAL hot coffee onto my own lap (PRIVATE PARTS).... Im outa  
this discussion- STOP!!!!

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418072)**

by **dlearl** on August 19th, 2008, 1:49 pm

*haakon wrote:*BMW does not accept ANY design or wiring fault at all.  
If this happened in the US AND someone brought it to court maybe they had to  
accept there was a design miss and let the unfortunate ones have their bikes  
repaired for free... maybe?

In this case, BMW doesn't manufacture the forks, but I digress.

There are a couple of ways a recall gets issued. One, the manufacture becomes aware of a problem and voluntarily issues a recall. Two, a few complaints come in to the NHTSB and they force manufactures to issue a recall. These are mostly due to emissions related stuff, and despite the "safety" angle mentioned in the H\*rley fuel filter recall, this is more about a failure of an emissions system than safety. And lastly, enough complaints come in from consumers that the NHTSB's hand is forced in dealing with a manufacturer.

AFAIK, there isn't a single consumer complaint re: catastrophic fork failures on GS' on the NHTSB website, so don't hold your breath on this one.

From the manufacturers point, they can do the voluntary bit, or they can "wait and see" what happens with the NHTSB or, and I would imagine in this case this is the scenario, one, or some, or a boatload of failures are reported (mostly though warranty claims) BMW has a meeting and they do some testing and determine which is CHEAPER, to settle claims on an individual basis, or issue a recall. I'm pretty sure that in this meeting, how BMW's reputation will be perceived by the owner's isn't on the agenda. It's about money. I'm sure that if there are several of these cases, they were settled on a case by case basis, and a non-disclosure agreement was part of the deal.

If the Baroness persues this course, I'm sure it's what will happen. I hate to say she probably should have talked to a lawyer FIRST, instead of ADVrider and the Chain Gang. A lawyer would have told her not to talk to ANYONE about the case, as she's pretty much laid BMW's defense out for them on the internet.

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418086)**

by **haakon** on August 19th, 2008, 3:08 pm

Yeahh... you are right dlearl.. I just got to cool down and accept reality- money rules... somehow

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418099)**

by **maddog** on August 19th, 2008, 8:34 pm

*ThorH wrote:*

*maddog wrote:* 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?

Thank you for not dipping your dick in your morning coffee while visiting.

Heh heh. Ahem. Never mind.

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418106)**

by **kwh** on August 19th, 2008, 11:01 pm

*dlearl wrote:*

*haakon wrote:*BMW does not accept ANY design or wiring fault at all.

If this happened in the US AND someone brought it to court maybe they had to accept there was a design miss and let the unfortunate ones have their bikes repaired for free... maybe?

In this case, BMW doesn't manufacture the forks, but I digress.

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Sage words. However, your last paragraph is making an assumption about what Red Baronesses primary motivation here is, as have several people on this forum and others. Sure, if the aim is to maximise your personal compensation when an incident such as this occurs there is an optimal strategy for achieving that aim, one which probably specifically excludes spreading the word and thus helping prevent other people from suffering the same fate.

If by publicising this issue, Red Baroness saves one life, because somebody who owns an F650GS notices a developing hairline crack that they never would have looked for let alone seen before they read about her story on the internerd and saw the pictures, then... well, you can't buy that kind of intangible compensation for your pain and suffering for all the cash in the world, can you. And if other people who have had the same experience, or found similar defects in their fork castings before things turned terminal, follow Red Baronesses lead and report their incidents to the NHTSA then she may even be able to know that she started the ball rolling that lead to a recall and saved several people from ending up how she did, or worse.

I don't speak for her, but I don't expect her first, second, third or last thought, either when she was laying on the Yukon tarmac with her arm hideously smashed, and somebody told her that her front wheel had come off, or at any time since,

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## **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418109)**

by **bigb** on August 19th, 2008, 11:47 pm

dlearl wrote:

...

(1) In this case, BMW doesn't manufacture the forks, but I digress.

...

(2) If the Baroness pursues this course, I'm sure it's what will happen. I hate to say she probably should have talked to a lawyer FIRST, instead of ADVrider and the Chain Gang. A lawyer would have told her not to talk to ANYONE about the case, as she's pretty much laid BMW's defense out for them on the internet.

(1) I agree with the first point. Its not BMW's geometry, and AL casting isn't foolproof: but I would think the fork company has continuous statistical process control (SPC) sampling-data as their evidence. The unknown variable is what happened to the bike in between. Good question which may have been answered in confessions, photos, and films.

(2) The second part is what you suggested on ADVrider on page 7 of their thread, to no avail. Showing what all she doesn't know will help BMW possibly countersue for libel. Her big breakthrough evidence was a clip on ChainGang. There are lots of inserted bits and pieces that are entered in FAQS, that the author is never to be heard from again. In effect, it is not reliable evidence alone.

(3) The reason KWH sounds like a lawyer is his unfamiliar roto-round british tongue (last post on thread n ADVrider below):

[http://www.advrider.com/forums/showthre ... 138&page=8](http://www.advrider.com/forums/showthre...138&page=8)

<http://www.advrider.com/forums/showthread.php?t=355138&page=8>

.....  
kwh

Fat Hairy Git

Joined: Jan 2005

Location: SA31, United Kingdom

Oddometer: 39

I hope there are gonna be words to go with these pictures!

-----  
I wanna hear from you both about the cut and the thrust, the ins and the outs, the ups and the downs...

-----  
Ken Haylock

BMW K1200GT SE, Triumph TT600 & H\*nda XL250 Degree

<http://www.cix.co.uk/~kwh> (<http://www.cix.co.uk/~kwh>)  
.....

No wonder. I have always had problems listening or reading Brits (forgive me bloke). Anyway, the 'Fat Hairy Git' (?), in his quest for his objectives may have blown any chance for a positive outcome and reversed the opportunity into a liability.

{And by the way, whoever was complaining about their fork seals going out, lol, its 'bugs'. You should have put BMW R1000 fork boots on



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## **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418112)**

by **kwh** on August 20th, 2008, 12:54 am

I expect Red-Baroness has abandoned this forum altogether as a bad job, to be honest.

Lawyer this, lawyer that, it happened because Red-Baroness rode the bike offroad, it must have been a result of the Trollhaugen get-off, it must have been the dealer's fault for not dismantling the bike and ultrasonically scanning every component, it's Red-Baronesses fault for riding too fast offroad, and now 'it's your fault kwh for not keeping quiet and letting certain people get on with blaming Red-Baroness and absolving BMW of any responsibility for the safety of their product...'.

The Trollhaugen crash is irrelevant. If Red-Baroness had been practicing wheelies on the bike every day for two years, that too would be irrelevant. If the bike has never suffered any front end damage that can be detected by either the rider or a competent mechanic equipped with standard garage tools and equipment, then it doesn't matter. Yes, if it was a Boeing 747, the service schedule would say 'ultrasonically scan the wing spars for cracks every x,000 flying hours', but it isn't, and the service schedule doesn't say 'dismantle and ultrasonically scan the front suspension for cracks every 6,000 miles', does it. So saying 'there was an incident that didn't appear to damage anything, but in hindsight that must have precipitated the sudden catastrophic structural failure 3,500 miles later, and that's BMW's defence right there' is completely bogus. That sort of crap might fly in the US court system, for all I know, but in the real world with real riders getting really killed by really collapsing front forks, it cuts no ice whatsoever.

I'd also point out yet again that in the absence of visible damage after the crash, there is no evidence whatsoever yet that the collapse even *was* precipitated by what happened at the Trollhaugen, but even if it had been, I think all these people nodding sagely and saying "Oh well, after a crash like that I'd have definitely bought a new motorcycle and not ridden that one again" are, frankly, missing the point by at least a million miles, and in any case are almost certainly not being honest with themselves. Only people who actually have spent thousands of pounds/dollars to replace the apparently entirely undamaged forks, swingarm and rear shock on their motorcycle because they thought it might have been invisibly damaged by a particularly nasty bump or pothole have the credibility to even make that assertion.

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## **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418116)**

by **maddog** on August 20th, 2008, 1:20 am

*bigb wrote:*{And by the way, whoever was complaining about their fork seals going out, lol, its 'bugs'. You should have put BMW R1000 fork boots on the first time (about 300 miles w/o cleaning forks) under warranty and put a thicker fork oil grade at the same time too (for only the cost of the boots). No fork defect there. The boot-less design is the only fault.}

Lol? What are you, 12?

That was me. You are incorrect. You are incorrect because you assume too many things, because you are not so smart, or both. Now, I don't know whether you graduated here from a Vespa or what, but I'm a good guy, so I'll write slow so you understand.

Bugs?

I had repeated fork seal problems. On the RHS this occurred 2 times, on the LHS this occurred more times than I care to recount. Let's say that at the rate I ride, I was having one failure per month of riding on the LHS. On the RHS I found a small ding I had missed the first time...filed it down with a nail file stolen from the wife, and problem solved.

On the LHS there was no such ding. In fact, there was no obvious cause of any kind. Until I took the fork apart with another fella, and we noticed that the slider was not straight. When I say not straight, I mean visibly so. (Just so you're clear: "visible" means "able to be seen or observed with the naked eye") Hmm. Why would a cast and machined member be visibly out of true? We put the LHS fork tube back together, seals and slide bush in place, and noticed that there was development of side-to-side play in the fork as we cycled it through its range of motion.

The assembly of a fork is such that once it is assembled, damper rods in place, slide bush/seal/dust cover on, etc. you should not have a visible side-to-side shimmy in the fork when it runs through its length. If you do, it is called a problem.

So, what did I do? I blamed it on bugs. Lol! Just kidding dude. Follow along. I bought a new slider, and put it on the bike.

Result? I was losing a LHS fork seal every 1,500km. I have now driven 10,500 km and no problems.  $10,500 - 1,500 = 9,000$  km more than previously. In fact, I am now getting (at a minimum) 7 times the life out of my seals, and the only thing I changed was the slider.

Bugs? I have ridden road and off road for 23 years now. I have never had any seal problem that could be attributed to bugs. Every one was either (1) dirty stanchions, (2) dings on the stanchions, or (3) this slider tube, ONE TIME.

Did I SAY that my fork problem is directly related to RedBaroness' crash? No. If I had, I would be guilty of assuming too many things. What I am saying is that my fork slider was out of true at the same location as her failure. My problem was either (1) a manufacturing problem, or (2) damage to the fork by the previous owner. If indeed the answer is (1), then it's an interesting coincidence. If it's (2), then there is no relation.

Bugs? Why not just blame it on Nazis in my fork?

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## Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p418122)

by **bigb** on August 20th, 2008, 2:22 am

*maddog wrote:...*

Bugs? I have ridden road and off road for 23 years now. I have never had any seal problem that could be attributed to bugs. Every one was either (1) dirty stanchions

OR BUGS

*maddog wrote: , (2) dings on the stanchions*

OR BUGS

*maddog wrote: , or (3) this slider tube, ONE TIME*

OR BUGS

*maddog wrote: .*

Did I SAY that my fork problem is directly related to RedBaroness' crash? No. If I had, I would be guilty of assuming too many things. What I am saying is that my fork slider was out of true at the same location as her failure. My problem was either (1) a manufacturing problem, or (2) damage to the fork by the previous owner. If indeed the answer is (1), then it's an interesting coincidence. If it's (2), then there is no relation.

...

Since you don't have a clue about either, why offer a conjecture based on increasingly decreasing serial probabilities? Lol indeed! Your vast experience should indicate that the first thing you do (or one of the very first) is put fork boots and new seals on ANY bike without boots (street and especially off road); and if a BMW, add heavier fork oil. This will eliminate most if not all fork leak problems short of wrecking the bike (minor dings or not).

But you do appear to have some unaddressed emotional baggage, so I would like to suggest you start a new thread so we can explore every detail. Wrecking or spending time and money on something not perceived to be your fault is traumatic. In your 'F650 Fork Seal Failure Catastrophy' thread, we can discuss cause and effect; and then place probablisitic ranges to each event. I just got my HP 41CX tuned, cleaned, and 2 brand new XMemory modules installed. I'm looking forward to a crunchy analysis. And then I will further elucidate how BUGS = DEBREE = DIRTY STANCHIONS. And then there is so much more like operator errors with the wrong tools. I am anxiously awaiting your new thread, 'F650 Fork Seal Failure Catastrophy'.

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