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## Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p457904)**

by **jasonsawyer** on August 5th, 2009, 9:25 am

*bigb wrote:*Its starting to look like a class action suit. Bring your cameras when you ride, and post your film here.

Just to be clear, I never said anything about a class action suit. If it turns out that all of the crash reports were trumped up then that's great - I can keep riding. IF (big if because I'm giving BMW the benefit of the doubt) it turns out that there was a problem that BMW somehow missed, I want to get it taken care of quickly so I can keep riding. Bottom line is I just want to keep riding as safely as is practical. I think this is reasonable.

Anyway - not sure why you're being such a prick about this thing. Surely a veteran BBS user like yourself would know that you can skip topics that you're not interested in. Maybe you should log off and go for a ride.

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p457931)**

by **grandevox** on August 5th, 2009, 12:24 pm

First let me say this: Any are really too many.

So they sold 47,000 motorcycles and 16 failed? IMHO, I do think MORE than 16 have failed in the fashion we are worrying about but for argument lets say that's it. That's .034%! Not enough for Der Korporation to worry about. I would suspect the "recall" if any would be to take the bike to an authorized dealer for inspection and replacements if cracks were found. A penetrating dye test would work fairly well to find hidden cracks. I will tell you this, after I first heard of this failure I checked my fork legs on my '02 Dakar with dye and a UV light - and found nothing wrong.

In a past life (30+ years ago) I worked for a Japanese single line dealer and I did see several failures like the type the F-650's are seeing, but mostly on motorcycles that hit something head on, or dirtbikes that had been ridden very VERY abusively and crashed hard. So, there really isn't anything new here. I do remember the mantra of the manufacturer that made the bikes I repaired "If the bike took front end damage that bent the forks, even slightly, it is a requirement that the fork sliders be replaced! No exceptions." So, we replaced them.

One thing to remember: motorcycles are not indestructible, and if used like they are sooner or later something is going to destruct at the lest convenient moment.

It will be interesting to see where this goes.

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## **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p457976)**

by **kwh** on August 6th, 2009, 12:43 am

Hmm... I really must unsubscribe from this thread, not to mention listening to myself when I say that I don't want to spend any more of my very valuable time on the F650 fork issue.

*grandevox wrote:*First let me say this: Any are really too many.

So they sold 47,000 motorcycles and 16 failed? IMHO, I do think MORE than 16 have failed in the fashion we are worrying about but for argument lets say that's it. That's .034%! Not enough for Der Korporation to worry about.

Actually, that isn't the number you need to look at, because there isn't a total failure number out of 47,000 anywhere in the public domain. The interesting figures, statistically speaking, are the number of failures identified and documented on Advrider and the net out of the 4,000 suspect bikes sold in the USA (I make that at least 7, which is 0.175%.

If you look at the percentage of Explorers that rolled over against total vehicle population (i.e. the size of the recall, which equated to a six figure number of vehicles), you'll find that that is already a greater percentage of the total than the Explorer case. Then you have to figure out what percentage of early F650GS owners in the USA happen to be on Advrider and reading the faceplant topic, and multiply up accordingly. Then multiply up again based on an assessment of how many people who suffered this problem *know* that they suffered this problem and crashed because of it, and/or are still in a position to talk about it.

The other interesting number is the Australia one - with a much smaller population, and anecdotal evidence from one insurance assessor in one city that describes 7 or 8 such failures. 8 in 600 is over 1%!

You could speculate that the duty cycle for a bike like the F650GS is far harder in Australia, where a lot people do very high mileages on unmetalled roads or offroad entirely just getting from place to place, but that would be an explanation rather than a reason to ignore the problem.

It could be that all of us who own motorcycles, especially dual-sport motorcycles, can expect a greater than 0.2% rate of sudden catastrophic structural failure, and that we are deluding ourselves if we believe otherwise. In which case I'd very much like to see the figures. It could be that F650 riders are stupider than riders of other brands of dual sport, and treat their bikes worse than - say - DRZ400 riders or KLR650 owners. Again, it would be nice to see the figures.

Their's a prima-facie case to answer here. Not that they cocked up in some minor way and designed a bike that in very rare circumstances could lose its front wheel - to err is human after all - but that they decided to redesign the suspect parts to solve the problem and then hoped that compensating the number of future casualties amongst the 47,000 who got their ducks in a row and somehow against all the odds got the issue into a courtroom and actually won would be less than the cost of doing a global recall and replacing 47,000 suspect right-hand fork legs.

Information would be the enemy of this strategy. If there really is no case to answer, and if BMW really don't have a problem with the early forks, then publishing as much information as possible would be the solution. The fact that BMW are attempting to keep a great deal of information secret doesn't tend to support the theory that this is all some giant attempt to scam the poor Bavarians.

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p457986)**

by **Marty** on August 6th, 2009, 2:22 am

*kwh wrote:*

Why have they sold 61 left hand fork sliders and 80 right hand fork sliders?

Not that I'm trying to support BMW's case, but I suspect that they sell more "right side" parts than "left side" parts - simply because in parking lot tip-overs, the bike is more likely to fall over to the right (rider less likely to be able to "save" it due to physics and physical location of rider). And SOME riders will have the insurance company replace anything that gets even a scratch on it... Have a hard time visualizing scratched fork sliders in a tip-over, but I suppose it *\*could\** happen. YMMV.

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### **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p457993)**

by **kwh** on August 6th, 2009, 2:47 am

*Marty wrote:*

*kwh wrote:*

Why have they sold 61 left hand fork sliders and 80 right hand fork sliders?

Not that I'm trying to support BMW's case, but I suspect that they sell more "right side" parts than "left side" parts - simply because in parking lot tip-overs, the bike is more likely to fall over to the right (rider less likely to be able to "save" it due to physics and physical location of rider). And SOME riders will have the insurance company replace anything that gets even a scratch on it... Have a hard time visualizing scratched fork sliders in a tip-over, but I suppose it *\*could\** happen. YMMV.

Err... surely that would suggest more left-hand sliders than right hand sliders? The sidestand is on the left, so failure to deploy the kickstand when dismounting, or roll-forward incidents, will tend to lead to left hand tip-overs.

I'm thinking that incidents that occur while moving, even at walking pace, are likely to be evenly split left to right.

I guess that road camber has an impact on which way a bike tips over at a standstill due to leg length/ground interface failures, so if this was the relevant factor you'd expect to see the numeric trend reversed in Australia and the UK where we ride on the other side of the road. Or BMW could just publish not just the raw figures but their analysis of them, with reasons. Which they clearly won't unless and until the NHTSA drags it out of them kicking and screaming.

On the other hand, are insurance assessors really generally signing off on new fork sliders because the bike has toppled over at 0mph and they have a visible mark on? You could pick up new forks every other day at that rate, just for stone chip damage...

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## **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p457994)**

by **maddog** on August 6th, 2009, 2:50 am

Damn, this is the thread that doesn't die.

Regardless of specifics, I have only this to add: the forks on ANY bike purported to be dual sport/adventure tourer or whatnot, SHOULD ABSOLUTELY be able to handle the rigors of riding 45mph over a washboard and/or potholed road. Simple as that.

If this was a H\*nda CBR (example) discussion board, or some other "road only" bike forum like for HD's or whatever, I would not be saying this. Any BMW (or other brand) adventure bike should be able to take this kind of use.

BMW should be able to explain their position. Simple really, isn't it?

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## **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p458027)**

by **kwh** on August 6th, 2009, 6:32 am

*maddog wrote:* Damn, this is the thread that doesn't die.

Regardless of specifics, I have only this to add: the forks on ANY bike purported to be dual sport/adventure tourer or whatnot, SHOULD ABSOLUTELY be able to handle the rigors of riding 45mph over a washboard and/or potholed road. Simple as that.

If this was a H\*nda CBR (example) discussion board, or some other "road only" bike forum like for HD's or whatever, I would not be saying this. Any BMW (or other brand) adventure bike should be able to take this kind of use.

BMW should be able to explain their position. Simple really, isn't it?

I'd say it still shouldn't happen, even on a pure road bike, frankly. Hence Suz\*k\* doing a recall on their GSXRs to inspect/brace their frames after a number of unfortunate catastrophic frame failures, some but not all associated with hamfisted riders (or hamfisted previous owners) pulling one too many botched wheelies. I think it is incumbent upon designers to build street legal bikes that can cope with the kind of abuse that they might reasonably expect to get, and when they can't cope, ensure that as far as possible they will fail in a graceful and non-catastrophic, non-life-threatening way.

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## **Re: Catastrophic F650GS Fork Failure (#p458034)**

by **xymotic** on August 6th, 2009, 7:16 am

*patobravo wrote:*

*ThumpAspen wrote:* Wayne, thanks for staying on top it and keeping your composure in the midst of a miniscule yet determined peanut gallery. I think I can safely speak for many when I say your diligence is appreciated.

+1

+1 More.

Ford recalled ONE MILLION cars because of 14 vehicles with a relatively minor defect (the engine stalling in a car will not catapult the occupant face first onto pavement)

<http://www.newsinferno.com/archives/2170>

(<http://www.newsinferno.com/archives/2170>)

CLEARLY there is an issue that at the very least needs to be answered definitively.

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