

# The Chain Gang

BMW F650 Discussions

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## Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts

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### **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428344)**

by [bluepoof](#) on November 6th, 2008, 4:00 am

*bigb wrote:* No amount of pictures of little chubby girls sprawled out on the road and mutilated alloy parts prove anything.

Um.

I know you didn't know this when you posted, but RedBaronness -- the "little chubby girl sprawled out on the road" in question -- is a personal friend of mine. I sincerely hope that you never have to see photos of one of your friends with a compounded fracture. Also, I'm not sure what you mean about "the live tape of her blindly leading the pack (of grinning experienced riders) on unknown dirt roads in third world countries" -- are you referring to the clip of her at the Trollhaugen DualSport event near Seattle? If you're going to be a jerk about someone you don't know, you should at least know what you're talking about.

That said:

The posts with the other peoples' comments are further in that thread. There are at least three other people in that thread who have had identical failures.

Honestly, it makes no nevermind to me whether you do anything about your forks or not, or whether you believe that this is a potential problem for others who ride this model year bike.

As JD posted in the second post to this thread:

This subject has been discussed ad-nauseum here:

[viewtopic.php?f=8&t=221882](#) (<http://f650.com/phpbb3/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=221882>)

I tried to answer questions honestly and politely in this thread, but if I'm just going to read personal bull\$hit attacks on a friend of mine, forget it.

Last edited by [bluepoof](#)

(./memberlist.php?mode=viewprofile&u=23779&sid=70bec2076a821f12d95bc041f93bf6dd)

on November 12th, 2008, 4:50 pm, edited 1 time in total.

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### **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428354)**

by **TechTeacher** on November 6th, 2008, 6:25 am

Darn BigB - having a bad day? A little harsh post. Not all that info. was from the same person or same post. Just seems crazy that all of the sudden the newer forks have more beef to them.

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### **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428356)**

by **patobravo** on November 6th, 2008, 7:09 am

I recall yet another post two or three years back where someone traveling in Central America had the front fork slider bust in the same manner.

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### **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428494)**

by **bigb** on November 7th, 2008, 9:48 am

"I tried to answer questions honestly and politely in this thread, but if I'm just going to read personal bull\$hit attacks on a friend of mine, forget it."

Forgive me, and I thought she might be your 'friend'.

"Darn BigB - having a bad day? A little harsh post. Not all that info. was from the same person or same post. Just seems crazy that all of the sudden the newer forks have more beef to them."

No, just another tricky day. Same source of instigation, and many are victims of crackups that may be scoping some small probabilistic relief (what the hell, right?).

"I recall yet another post two or three years back where someone traveling in Central America had the front fork slider bust in the same manner."

All the velocity of 800 lbs are initially pinpointed on the forks axle in case of a horizontal impact (at 50 mi/hr, a few tons force?). Almost every 600 cc quad has met its fate with a front end crackup. Sue Hunda? Off road riders crack their front ends up often (ride hard, but professional off-road riders, so comparable given no repetitive and quantitative data). I've never heard the first one complain. Do all the riders of telescopic forks have a claim if they hit a pothole blindly at 50mph in a foreign country, which later develops into an accident after just eyeballing it externally and riding on?

But yes Pat, I'll grant you every two or three years someone on the web will have some similar malfunction. Is that a trend? Do you know how many controlled variables need to be verified to make it a similar claim of sequenced events? If it was a valid claim, it may have been taken care of promptly, fairly, and discretely. From the evidenced video film, I could have guaranteed this would not be considered further (although I 'ONLY' suggested it 'might' not be considered when I was immediately assaulted with bombastic and demeaning swear words). NOW if your rider 2 or 3 years ago also had a similar film of hitting a dirt-road pot hole at about 50mph, leading the pack of riders fearlessly on unknown African roads (I believe), and they were rewarded compensation after broadcasting this on the web after about 50 posts, then I'd surely backtrack. Forgive me for saying what most likely think (and many have said) after seeing the whole web campaign.

The author verbally b-slapped me for initially politely suggesting she may have a problem getting compensation. It looks like I was correct as evidenced by corporate inaction, as many others similarly chimed in after I was the first to get off the 'mamby-pamby' parade of fantasy hopes. But TechTeacher may be right, I could have been 'cashing in a savings-stamp book of overdue negative strokes'. But I was right then, and until someone offers substantial quantitative or verified data, my hypothesis still holds. Sometimes the truth is bitter AND the only remedy against constant delusional efforts to manipulate reality through nothing more than repetition and pure chance alone.

Cheers

And Bluepoof, sorry about the grinning riders following. I just think of someone speeding over a hill blindly, and that's what I do when I tag on behind; because they will get pulled over, and not me as evidenced repeatedly (although I will get brow beaten for a few seconds as the Trooper will pass me). Or in this case, it was

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428517)**

by **SMUG SLUG** on November 7th, 2008, 12:03 pm

WOW.....

anybody know what the deal is with a '06 GS forks fitting a '01 dakar? straight up swap 'em or keep the Dakar uppers and swap out the lower sliders ?..... FAQs mentions things about a clip vs threaded fork cap (not too sure how up to date the FAQ section on differences is).....anything else different?

thoughts or ideas about this **modification and maintenance**?

I imagine that I should use the H\*nda fork seals for the cheapness on pocket padding.

edit:

i couldn't help it..... i needed to further stir pot.....

**from the FAQ section:**

*GS Catastrophic Fork Failure?*

*I own a F650 GS that I received new in June of 2000. After about 5,000 miles, I experienced a catastrophic failure of the castings on both side of the front forks. I sustained major injuries. BMW has admitted to knowing of 3 nearly identical failures before they redesigned the forks, adding more material. They decided not to notify owners. I'm wondering if any Chain Gang members know of similar failures. Gertarg '00 F650GS*

*I forgot to mention that as both sides of the forks snapped, the front wheel departed the bike leaving the bike and me doing 3 flips as the forks dug into the dirt. By the way the front wheel is in almost perfect condition. I didn't hit anything. Gertarg*

*That is the first instance of that happening that I have ever heard. Trevor #999 Back in '02 I purchased some parts from a guy of the internet...I think it was of of IBMWR, can't remember...they were new spares he had for a long tour down south. He was injured really bad for a few months when his front end came apart, but I can't remember if he said the forks or the wheel itself. I talked to him through e-mail and on the phone and I'm trying to find the records of what I purchased and then to narrow it down. He did say that he was involved with some sort of legal action with BMW at the time due to his situation not being the first, although his story was the only one I'd heard of until now. I wonder if he's the same guy? beem\_dubya #1328*

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428536)**

by **nineof6** on November 7th, 2008, 2:06 pm

*bigb wrote:* No amount of pictures of little chubby girls sprawled out on the road ...

This is rude and insensitive.

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428913)**

by **WayneC** on November 12th, 2008, 12:30 am

In total there are 14 failures known about at this stage and yes there are 3 NHTSA reports lodged No's 10244404, 10238415, 10245369, & one DOTARS report in Australia

The issue only affects machines manufactured prior to Oct 2002

The posts to advrider are not all from the one source as suggested above

The issue was first published in 2004 in BMWRA magazine as per the post below

<http://f650.com/phpbb3/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=221882&st=0&sk=t&sd=a&start=12>  
(<http://f650.com/phpbb3/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=221882&st=0&sk=t&sd=a&start=120#p4278>)

Yes the later lower sliders fit the early machines, they are all one part No on the fiche. only new style fork sliders have been supplied as a spare part by BMW since early in 2003. It is a lower slider swap only.

It would seem the RHS fails and that then takes out the left. I have now run 50,000kms with a new RHS and old LHS which survived the original RHS failure

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428951)**

by **maddog** on November 12th, 2008, 5:21 am

*SMUG SLUG wrote:* anybody know what the deal is with a '06 GS forks fitting a '01 dakar? straight up swap 'em or keep the Dakar uppers and swap out the lower sliders ?..... FAQs mentions things about a clip vs threaded fork cap (not too sure how up to date the FAQ section on differences is).....anything else different?

Hey Smug...assuming you want to do the change, the only part which is under scrutiny is the lower slider. Stanchions and internals are not considered suspect as far as I know. So there's really no point in changing out the others if you are worried about this deal. Obviously if you suspect damage to your stanchions, for example serious dings or other things that are affecting your seal life or whatever, then you could replace these.

On the whole, I am kinda sitting on the fence here. Regardless of the total post content or his analysis of the riders in question, bigb does raise a point that we don't have a particularly scientific sampling of the overall population (I mean population of the forks in a statistical sense, not population of riders). Further, these forks have been subjected to such a wide range of potential stresses, under so many conditions, that it is probably not possible to compare all cases scientifically to arrive at a statistically sound conclusion.

OTOH you do have what appears to be a number of reported incidents, including some officially reported ones, of failures. This combined with the "evidence" that BMW saw SOME reason to change their fork design at some point...but did not issue a recall or advisory. Evidence meaning we know it happened, not a smoking gun.

Further, I propose that the reason some of these riders had low post counts is that they got on line for the specific purpose of reporting the claims. I know many riders who do not post anything to web sites unless they consider it REALLY important. So I don't think it's valid to reject their claims on the basis of low post count. Your conclusion may vary.

My perspective. Summa sumarum, I think if you have had some type of incident in which you suspect you may have damaged or otherwise stressed the front end, and your machine has the old forks, you probably want to consider changing them to be on the safe side. But yeah, that's pretty much sense, isn't it?

Dunno, hard to say. Et cetera.

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428955)**

by **bluepoof** on November 12th, 2008, 5:50 am

I agree, maddog. I'm changing mine purely for peace of mind. That's worth it, to me.

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428962)**

by **rob feature** on November 12th, 2008, 6:29 am

I've just kinda been quietly watching all this go down for quite a while now and have to say it's pretty unsettling. I have the old forks. And I have had this in the back of my head for a while now every time I ride. As it looks at this moment, there have been 14 documented cases...is that right? IMO, that's WAAAY too many.

Without getting all these people in a room and having them tell their stories in great detail along with complete history of the forks, there pretty much stands one more or less fact...the old style forks broke at least 14 times while someone was riding along. And there were probably more that went unreported.

I'm just not gonna feel the same on the bike until I get this addressed. Obviously BMW knows of a problem, as they redesigned the fork...probably after they heard of an incident or 2. But never issued a recall. And the cheapest I'm gonna get out of this is buying a new set of sliders. I can't say that I'm all that happy about that.

Is anyone organizing talks with BMW for replacements? Going after this as a group would probably get more sympathy from them. Or will it take a failure to get them to listen to us individually? I'm personally kinda pissy that they haven't issued a recall on the whole thing. It's not like a faulty blinker...it's something that can seriously fuck you up in a big hurry.

Would anyone be interested in maybe organizing something? I'm not sure how to go about it, but hearing from many organized concerned riders will surely have a bigger impact than hearing from spotty individuals. And since it's gonna get spendy anyway, I wouldn't mind kicking in for a nice letter written by say a legal type

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p428975)**

by **SMUG SLUG** on November 12th, 2008, 8:02 am

Mad Dog: I realize that the sliders are the only thing that needs to be replaced, but i was able to find a whole GS front end for cheaper than the purchase of new sliders. SO it is a lot easier to swap out the L and R fork and then resell the front end and try to recoup some of the \$. Thanks for the heads up and the advice.....cheers.

With that said I just bought a '03 Dakar from an inmate this weekend and will be selling the '01 (if anyone is interested PM me) so I will not be doing the fork swap but will advise new buyer once monies are exchanged.

I think it is cheaper to replace the front sliders on your terms than it is to do it after a catastrophic failure, not to mention the collateral damage that could be encountered with the forks going at 70mph on the interstate. If you will spend \$600 on a Areostitch jacket or double that on touratech panniers it just seems like a lot better investment if you spend the \$ on some new sliders.....IMHO. But to each his own.....some folks don't like to wear helmets either.

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p429004)**

by **WayneC** on November 12th, 2008, 11:42 am

The Stanchions and internals are not suspect in any way whatsoever

The statistics for F650GS sales during the period up to Oct 02 are 47000 machines delivered to customers during the period concerned (source - BMW annual reports). Dakars accounted for around 10% of sales

Sales estimates for USA, Sth Africa & Australia over the period are, USA - 4000, SA - 500, Oz - 600

The vast majority were sold into Europe & used in low stress urban environments. Failures have occurred on machines used in low stress environments.

Overall it is estimated only between 5,000 & 10,000 machines are being used in dirt or high stress environments as the riders here tend to do.

Failures have occurred at 1400 miles, 1800 miles, 5000 miles, & others at up to 50,000 miles. The manufacturing dates of the machines are not clustered together so it is unlikely to be a batch problem

A number of the people reporting failures on advrider in fact joined in order to post their experiences after hearing of the thread by word of mouth or as in my case it coming up in a google search on fork seals.

Re approaching BMW, In the UK the issue has been raised directly with the UK Service Manager by an owner, The press are also asking questions for articles in the UK and Australian motorcycle media. In Australia DOTARS is requesting information from BMW Oz & NHTSA will be doing so in the US.

It would be of assistance in getting BMW to make some statement on the issue if owners were to simply ask BMW NA about the issue. I understand BMWMOA may well be doing so.

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p429007)**

by **rob feature** on November 12th, 2008, 12:21 pm



*WayneC wrote:*

The statistics for F650GS sales during the period up to Oct 02 are 47000 machines delivered to customers during the period concerned (source - BMW annual reports).

So at a rate of \$700 per bike (minus seals), that's well over \$3 million in parts alone (retail, but they don't have that kind of stock lying around, so that might go higher). Add another \$2 million for replacement and you have a good reason not to recall...just fix it quickly and quietly, deny, and hope the balance sheets work in your favor.

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### **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p429187)**

by **bigb** on November 13th, 2008, 3:38 pm

I remember talking to a great BMW wrench one time. I asked him about my R90/6 which was in top shape, and how it would hold up to 100mph (hilltop to hilltop) interstate travel over time w/ valve adjustments every 2k miles. He said realistically that's racing durations, and maintenance would increase significantly for the 1976 oem setup.

Likewise, if you are running offroad, look at the stresses even at low mph hitting orthogonal (right angle) objects that darn near stop you in your tracks. Off road is brutal. Street riding can be brutal, if you live in sink-hole Florida or pot-hole Arkansas (I don't wish that on anyone, ha-ha).

So if you are riding off road, especially competitive speeds (i.e. over 45mph), then that's part of the price for your neglect on an oem bike. Its not that different from the other models except wheel size, which helps travel angles, but its not a ktm racer which requires significant maintenance every other run almost. Offroading is expensive, very expensive. Why do you think vehicle manufacturers feed off road egos? Because it tears things up real quick and its not under warranty: period. Duh.

Rotax engines are made for constant high speed rpm racing, which is good for the street. And good for offroad if you got the money, and don't mind your organs sloshing around constantly. But I personally would not get too upset when a rider videos themselves wiping out on a dirtroad (at least once), and then can't correlate why there is a reasonable chance this effects the failure incident on the street. The street was smooth, I wasn't speeding, ... just what happened here? Seriously, any bike accident is tragic since motorcycles are a delicate balancing act on 2 wheels to begin with, and I'm glad she is alive and not permanently disabled. So if you ride like that and have greater than one incident like that behind you, yes, it is reasonable that you may want to seriously consider an upgraded slider design (maybe the only difference between the other models other than wheels and fiberglass effectively).

Personally, I'm waiting on word on Y\*m\*ha project if they are upside down forks. But mine actually handle great with just heavier fork oil. What is going to happen is without verifying any information other than a cited number of incidents (which I've yet seen any 'actual' verification), people (here) are going to start buying new sliders, forks, etc... Then to justify their purchases, they will start saying "Oh yeah, its definitely needed", and there will be a consensus based on dozen-post-posters who are all good friends with the person who always either starts or is the referenced threads for each ensuing thread. Forgive me for being statistically frank, and I'm very suspicious of Big Industry, there is just too many one-sided coincidences for this alone to hold much validity in my estimations.

Of course do what makes you feel psychologically better. Its your azz on the road and no one else's. But don't start manufacturing facts from your paranoia. From the 'ONE KNOWN' incident involved and the facts surrounding it, it is significantly less than a realizable consideration from a relatively safe street riders perspective. ymmv

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## **Re: Fork Failure F650gs - Thoughts (#p429191)**

by **bluepoof** on November 13th, 2008, 4:42 pm

*bigb wrote:*From the 'ONE KNOWN' incident involved and the facts surrounding it

Do you even read the other posts in this thread? Nevermind; I know the answer.

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