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Has anybody ever seen a failure like this on an early F650GS or Dakar?

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Comments and Questions on what is the best bike for YOU, for YOUR trip. Note that we believe that ANY bike will do, so please remember that it's all d PERSONAL OPINION. Technical Questions for all brands go in their own forum.

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21st October 2008

khaylock

New on the HUBB

Has anybody ever seen a failure like this on an early F650GS or Dakar?

[Join Date:](#) Oct

[Location:](#) Carr

[Posts:](#) 12



That was on the Alaska Highway near Destruction Bay on the way back from a tour of Alaska. Forks fractured at 85mph, compound arm fracture, tortuous medevac back to Seattle for emergency surgery. Lucky it happened in the wilderness and not in heavy freeway traffic, though.

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I figure if anybody is going to have seen or heard of anything like that, it will be people going RTW on the bikes.

BMW updated the design of the forks sometime around the end of 2002 and early 2003 after small spate of these, apparently - the new forks are much beefier than the old ones in the area that failed above, so if you ride a bike with the beefier forks you don't have anything to be concerned about as far as I know.

Last edited by khaylock : 22nd October 2008 at 01:39. Reason: Spelling...

22nd October 2008

Mads.M
New on the HUBB



Join Date: Oct 2008
Location: Svendborg, D
Posts: 4

I've read the thread on advrider.com...All I can say is that I'm happy I don't own a pre-2002 GS, or I'd worry every time I took it out for a spin.

What makes me furious is the way BMW handled the incident, simply stating: "you must have hit something"!!!

I've never heard of anybody's wheel coming off at 85mph regardless of make, but I have heard of stress-cracks on different bikes mainly in the frame though. But apparently at least one other GS-rider has experienced the forks disintegrating at speed...scary!

22nd October 2008

khaylock
New on the HUBB



Join Date: Oct
Location: Carr
Posts: 12

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mads.M**
But apparently at least one other GS-rider has experienced the forks disintegrating at speed...scary!

I think we are up to about ten distinct identified cases in that thread now, with pictures in hand for five of them. Of the seven incidents where what happened is known, none occurred in heavy traffic (presumably this is why the riders are still alive to tell the tale) but one resulted in injury, and of the remaining six, the score as far as we know is one slight injury, four serious injuries and one very serious injury indeed.

Only one of the failures that details are available happened in any kind of collision - the rider hit a dog that darted into the road at about 40mph, the forks failed on one side and the rider was chucked off. The others have all been spontaneous failures, including the guy who had his forks catastrophically fail just like this on Ruta 40 in Argentina back in 2001 and suffered a broken neck for his trouble.

22nd October 2008

farghuar
Veteran HUBBer



Join Date: M
Location: Oz
Posts: 231

This is just typical for BMW and I continue to wonder why they can't get the basics right.

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I crossed the Sahara on a Yamaha RD350 in 1978, closely followed by 4 BMWs (2 * R90/6 and 2 * R90/S).

My Yamaha came out intact with no damage to forks or subframe.

Of the 4 BMs, 3 snapped their front forks off at the base of the lower triple clamp and 4 snapped subframes.

30 years later and I watch "wrong way round" to see snapped subframes on GS12s, a now I read here about snapped forks on GS650s.

When, oh when will the BMW factory ever learn, and when oh when, will the poor suckers who keep buying their crap ever see the light. 😊

Garry from Oz.



22nd October 2008

Linzi
Veteran HUBBer

Join Date: 0
Location: UK
Posts: 434

Good Info

Thanks for that last information. I was already put off BMW for many other reasons but now it's final and complete. Especially when Yamaha have the base covered. I can't be the only one who is shocked and more at the thought of the front collapsing anytime, anywhere! Then the company doesn't recall them?!!! Apart from this it reminds me not to take essential parts of any bike for granted. Linzi.



22nd October 2008

Threewheelbonnie
Veteran HUBBer

Join Date: Apr 2008
Location: West Yorks
Posts: 398

First of all, glad the injury was a lot less than it could have been and best wishes for a speedy recovery.

In a past life I worked for an effectively German company with various branded European customers and dealt with some similar issues. My area at the time was brakes so obviously the potential for huge issues when there was anything going wrong.

To answer Garry's question as best I can, BMW will get it right when their teamwork improves. The company I worked for and all the big German customers are run by engineers and have a blame culture that would have scared Julius Cesar. The engineers and God help any mere customers contact who suggests they might be wrong. The reaction in BMW to the fork issues will have been;

1. It's not our fault, we are great engineers it must be the user.
2. No one in Germany who we know really well brought us any busted forks.
3. We don't make the forks we buy them, let the supplier sort it out. Oh, by the way, don't change anything we designed.
4. Hmm, an interesting bit of metalurgy/stress analysis, this will get me my doctorate. Lets keep it secret so only our company learn from it.
5. Ok, we did the campaign change, lets get back to proper engineering and design yet another weird indicator control.

The next people in the pecking order below the engineers and the accountants who would know why you are giving away forks and scrapping stock.

The Japanese customers (and those who accept the Japanese system) worked as tears. The team member for Sales would have screamed about next years figures if the process is wrong, the purchasing guy would have taken it rather personally that he might have

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not given the external supplier all the right info and the engineers jump at the chance to improve the product within the whole team's major aim of staying in business. It makes life hell for the suppliers but the product is almost always right. It only goes wrong when people high up ignore their teams and usually try and keep things secret for the sake of the company image.

Even the small manufacturers do it better IMHO. It may take time to get info to the M of say Moto Guzzi, but when you do, he'll go down on the shop floor in person and kick the **** of the guy going anything wrong.

The part number thing mentioned on ADV rider I don't consider sneaky. The lower fork leg part drawing can be changed and the complete assembly simply updated indexes. This saves production and parts people hassle once the change is finished, they modify two drawings not a thousand stores and service documents.

The statement from BMW Sales "I/we never heard of this.." I'm not keen on but is probably true. Dealing with this sort of stuff isn't easy and most people don't make a career out of it. The guy who phoned and probably his boss won't have heard of it. The files on the subject will be well buried until you get to the right person in Munich. If a lawyer challenged it you'd get a simple "our employees used the information they had the time" answer.

I never came up with a way to beat the system on this except repeated contact and threats to publicise issues. Even if every F650 owner went to the dealer on the same day to check the recall had been done, you'd only annoy the sales team not the people who run the show.

While I hate to bash BMW, in this case buying an XT could be a very good solution.

Andy



22nd October 2008

khaylock

New on the HUBB

Join Date: Oct
Location: Carr
Posts: 12

Thank you for the insight, Andy!

I think the big thing in this case is that yes they changed the design, and yes they put the new design into production for all future product, but there is no recall, not even a service campaign, for swapping the older design of fork to the later design.

To err is human and all that. To have a few organisational problems accepting that you have a fault and then dealing with it is definitely sub-optimal. But putting a design change into production specifically to resolve a safety issue and not doing anything about the installed base of product in the field gives the appearance of the very worst kind of corporate cynicism to me.

Let us hope that publicity is the answer and that BMW relents under the public spotlight and initiates a recall!

Last edited by khaylock : 22nd October 2008 at 18:42. Reason: Grammar & missing words...



22nd October 2008

Threewheelbonnie

Veteran HUBBer

Join Date: Apr 2008
Location: West Yorks
Posts: 398

Sorry, I misread the stuff on ADV Rider. I thought there had been a recall not just a design change.

There are a couple of organisations in the UK who might convince BMW to sort this out before someone gets killed. The SMMT, Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders



monitor most recall actions in the UK. BMW UK is a member. I'm sure if they were sent the photo's and information noted here on ADV Rider and on the chain gang they'd be able to pass them to someone who might use the phrase "class action" in a call to Munich. BMF (and MAG) also have contacts at BMW UK and would I'm sure be happy to contact them.

Have you sent MCN the photo's? I'm sure BMW read this comic (shouldn't be nasty to them, they might help someone in this case). If you like this idea do it before the others. There are people in all such big companies who use letters from the likes of SMMT to be ready for when the journo's come calling.

I mailed a couple of contacts to try and get some names at the above, so will come back if I can get to the bike people via the truck ones.

Andy



22nd October 2008

#1

pecha72
Veteran HUBBer

Join Date: A
Location: He
Posts: 499

F***, that's a nasty one. Cant put into words, how much hate the thought of totally losing control at speed, because of a technical fault. A nightmare.

If this really isnt an isolated case, and there really is an issue with these, BMW should spare no expenses, and take care of it with maximum urgency. It would be a good idea to try to get some media to react also (but first confirm that an issue with the design does exist).



22nd October 2008

#1

khaylock
New on the HUBB

Join Date: Oct
Location: Carr
Posts: 12



Quote:

Originally Posted by **pecha72**
*F***, that's a nasty one. Cant put into words, how much hate the thought of totally losing control at speed, because of a technical fault. A nightmare.*

You and me both!

Quote:

If this really isnt an isolated case, and there really is an issue with these, BMW should spare no expenses, and take care of it with maximum urgency. It would be a good idea to try to get some media to react also (but first confirm that an issue with the design does exist).

Well, here's the pretty obvious design change...



...and here is what the guy who crashed on Ruta 40 in Argentina in January 2001 had say on F650.com in 2005 about why BMW changed the design...

Quote:

Front forks total failure on '00 F650GS.

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

...

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.

...

I bought the bike new in Aug 2000. Put about 5,000 miles on it mainly on blacktop and probably 400 on gravel/dirt roads. The failure occurred in Jan 01 on a dirt road in Argentina. Normal dirt road. No pot holes or obstructions - just 3 tracks.

The casting on the forks where it holds the wheel is the part that snapped - first on one side and then the other.

I have a lawsuit pending with BMW (the wheels of justice move slowly) and they have admitted to knowing about 3 failures other than mine that happened before they redesigned the part, adding material. I'm wondering if there are other failures that BMW doesn't know about or isn't talking about.

Gertarg

...and here is what a witness to the crash on Ruta 40 had to say about it here - [alaska and back with one bad accident - BMW Sport Touring Forums](#) - after reading the Advrid thread...

Quote:

Yup, exactly the same thing happened to one of those GSs on my South America trip in 2001. I looked at the bike afterwards, the axle mounts fractured, pathetic design, you could drop a KLR650 off a roof and it wouldn't break like that. My fellow rider broke his neck among other things, we were out of helicopter range and the first ambulance that made it there wouldn't take him because his injuries were too bad. He ended up on a bigger vehicle then having two airlifts and spent several months in hospital down there and a couple more in Chicago but as far as I know he recovered OK. He sued BMW and I believe they settled, the lawyers talked to us all and I told them what I thought of that design, don't know any more details as it was obviously all hushed up by the lawyers. This was on the infamous RT40 in Argentina, but the road wasn't to blame for this one.

Nobody has managed to trace 'Gertarg' yet, but there are very motivated people working very hard to do so. It has been confirmed to our satisfaction that his silence was a condition of the settlement he received, but he will be traced.

So anyway, I'm thinking that BMW certainly have at least a *couple* of teensy little questions to answer from all that. There may not be quite enough evidence in hand to actually hang them, but plenty enough to build the gallows and uncoil the rope!



23rd October 2008

tedmagnum

Contributing Member
Veteran HUBBer

#1

Join Date: Jul 2005
Location: Back in Blight
Posts: 1,391

Add it to the list !!!

I still can't believe how many people chose to use this god-awful bike.. BMW sure know how to market a product.

I know I sound like a broken record but I'd rather travel on a Chinese scooter than an F650 GS.

BMW's response is also no shock.. It's the same old "I've got your money now so I don't care" attitude people are used to.

www.touringted.com.



23rd October 2008

khaylock

New on the HUBB

#1

Join Date: Oct
Location: Carr
Posts: 12

Quote:

Originally Posted by **mollydog**
Jeeesus! As the condemned BMW "Basher" of HUBB, I must say, of all the things I've seen go wrong on the bikes, or read about on the forums I never had heard about the broken fork issues.

To say that BMW have been somewhat backward in coming forward about this issue is to understate the case somewhat.

Quote:

I'm hoping current RTW riders on F650's will have a close look at their forks and inspect them for cracks, maybe do a Magnaflux test, which may show sub-surface cracks?

All times are GMT +10. The time now is 21:41.

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