

## Seal-Savers



review by Mark Barnes

**R**EPLACING DAMAGED FORK seals is a tedious chore at best, and can be both tricky and expensive on some forks. But ignoring a leaking seal can have serious negative consequences. Not only can a compromised fork seal leave your fork legs and front brake coated in oil, it can give water and debris access to your fork's delicate bushings and tiny (read: easily clogged) damping circuits.

Sometimes, the breach is not a matter of actual damage to the seal; particulate matter can prop the seal lip outward, away from the surface of the fork tube. In such cases, the fix can be as easy as slipping a piece of 35mm film in-between the seal and chrome tube to move said matter out of the way. But this technique runs the risk of sending the offending bit(s) onward and inward, and can cut the seal lip if done sloppily. So, even if a seal doesn't necessarily need replacing, it would still be better to keep junk from working its way into the seal/fork tube interface. The old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," certainly applies here.

Enter SealSavers. It's hard to imagine a simpler design. These are neoprene sleeves that slip over the juncture where the small fork tube enters the large fork tube. SealSavers serve as auxiliary "dust scrapers." Dust scrapers are the external seals visible on assembled forks. They're supposed to keep outside stuff outside, while the fork seals (oil seals, more accurately) are supposed to keep the inside stuff inside. If dust scrapers do their job, fork seals (which reside right behind them) do just fine. But dust scrapers can fail, sometimes miserably.

Picture this: If mud splashes onto your car's windshield on a rainy day, your wipers may easily clear it off in a single swipe,

nice and neat. But what if that mud was allowed to dry into a crust while your car was parked, and you then tried to clear it with your wipers? Not so nice and neat. The same thing can happen with dust scrapers when a film of mud or other gunk dries on your fork's sliders (this can even happen while you're riding). When a big bump sends the sliders deep into the stanchion tubes, the sliders can drag that hardened crud past the dust scrapers and right under your fork seals. That same junk is much less likely to make it past the length of a SealSaver.

In fact, it's important to keep in mind that such crud will gradually build up inside the SealSaver's length as it does its job. Left there, that grit can potentially act like sandpaper on your chromed tubes—a far worse problem than a bad fork seal! So, SealSavers need to be periodically rolled up and rinsed out.

Installation is easy, once the fork legs have been removed from their triple clamps. SealSavers simply slide down into position, where they're secured to the large tubes with (included) zip-ties. Although they hug the small tubes, SealSavers do not add a noticeable amount of stiction. We've used SealSavers on several different off-road motorcycles with good results, meaning fewer—if any—seal leaks

than when we didn't use them.

SealSavers come in a wide variety of colors and four different diameters, as well as two lengths. They can be used on conventional and inverted fork designs. The short length (pictured) is priced at \$19.95 per pair; long ones are \$26.95. SealSavers are very cheap insurance against seal failure—just be sure to clean them out regularly.

**SealSavers—P.O. Box 856; Wildomar, CA 92595; 951-244-6475; [www.sealsavers.com](http://www.sealsavers.com)**



## Zip-Ty Racing Masterlink Tool

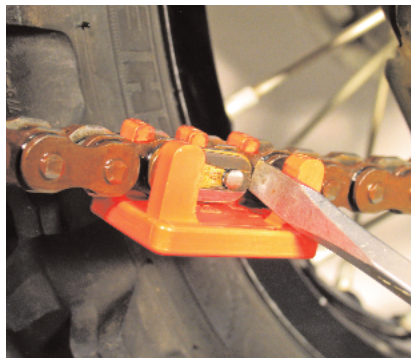


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**S**OMETIMES, LITTLE THINGS make big differences. Take chain replacement. Not rocket science, right? But, also, not as straightforward as it seems. Make a false move as you push that masterlink clip into place, and it'll go sailing across your garage floor in search of an impossibly dark crevice. Maybe you'll find it in time to leave with your buddies, maybe you won't. Your whole day could be ruined by that tiny sliver of steel. Or, if it waited to make its escape during your ride, having been weakened by tweaking during removal or installation, a lot more than your day could be ruined.

Zip-Ty has come up with another little thing that makes a big difference. Their new Masterlink Tool is an ingeniously simple device that slips into place around your masterlink. Three narrow posts snuggle in-between the local rollers, and two larger posts bracket the masterlink's outer plate. These larger posts provide stationary surfaces to use for leverage while pushing the clip on or off with the tip of a flathead screwdriver. There's not much to it, but it makes the job significantly easier, with a lot

less chance of slippage that could either damage the clip or send it flying into oblivion.



We like this procedure better than trying to coax the clip on and off with regular or needle-nose pliers, or with an unanchored screwdriver tip (which can lead to the unholy mixture of blood and chain lube—*Ouch!*). Dedicated masterlink pliers work well, but cost more and are heavier and bulkier in a tool pack. As a bonus, the Masterlink Tool will hold your loose chain ends in position while the masterlink is off; masterlink pliers won't do you that favor.

Zip-Ty has a good reputation for making durable, functional, race-proven gear, and this molded plastic piece seems to continue that tradition. Different size Masterlink Tools can be purchased individually for \$14.95 each, or all six sizes (415, 420, 428, 520, 525, 530) can be bought as a set for \$39.95.

**Zip-Ty Racing; 7247 Coyote Trail, Oak Hills, CA 92344; (-760-244-7028; [www.ziptyracing.com](http://www.ziptyracing.com)**