



The Harrison Family

A Story of Survival

#TornadoStrong



How One Decision Saved A Family



Kevin and Sarabeth Harrison know that they and their two young children are alive today because of a single decision. Before the historic tornado outbreak in 2011, they built a safe room.

During the four-day outbreak that began April 25, 362 tornadoes touched down in nearly one-third of states. Of the 321 people killed, 238 lived in Alabama.

One of the deadly tornadoes struck the Harrison home on April 27 — the day that the National Weather Service later dubbed the “deadliest day for tornadoes” in the last 75 years. On that day, as tornadoes rendered

Birmingham and Tuscaloosa nearly unrecognizable, the Harrisons hunkered down to the north in Athens inside their concrete masonry safe room.

Their survival tells a story of parental love, both of theirs for their children, Sophie and Mason, and of Kevin’s father for them as he helped Kevin build the life-saving bunker. Even after 10 years, Kevin and Sarabeth are still shocked when they recall how 30 seconds of roaring winds forever altered their lives and their community. But theirs is a story of survival. The Harrison family embodies the truth that safe rooms save lives and that we can survive when we prepare.

Since 2011, the Harrisons have dedicated their efforts to preventing tornado injuries and saving lives. Learn more about their story.

-  The green box is the addition that is still standing in some of the images.
-  The yellow box is the location of the storm cellar.
-  The other boxes are where the corresponding colored trucks were in the images.





Looking at the back of the home from the garage



Garage that contained the tornado safe room



Devastation shown from the back of the home



What was left of the Harrisons' home



The tornado safe room that saved the Harrison family



The tornado safe room: all that was left standing of the Harrisons' garage



Two vehicles ended up on the Harrisons' property



Vehicle that landed right outside tornado safe room



Kevin, Sarabeth, Sophie, and Mason Harrison



Leslie Chapman-Henderson – FLASH President and CEO, Kevin Harrison, Sarabeth Harrison, and Dr. Ernst Kiesling – Texas Tech University and inventor of the tornado safe room