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Storage barn destroyed

farm

Storm thrashes through family

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BROCKTON — Life can change in a matter of minutes, especially at the hands of Mother Nature. Bryan and Margaret Crispin's lives changed in seconds when their farm property was torn apart by what Environment Canada has confirmed as a tornado Tuesday evening.

The two Hanover natives have owned and operated a cash crop farm for the past 30 years, and the farm belonged to Bryan's grandfather before they took it over.

The storm blew through the Hanover and Walkerton areas in the evening of June 14.

"I looked out (the window) at 7:07 pm and it was getting dark," said Margaret. "It happened at 7:30 pm."

The sky had turned

black and winds became violent. The wind snapped the tree in the Crispins' front yard along with two hydro poles at the road and near their barn. The Crispins also fought to close the windows in their home against the gusty weather.

"Bryan was downstairs trying to close the windows . . . it was sucking the screen right out of his hand," said Margaret. "I have never seen anything like this. You only see this in movies."

The couple's barn next to their home also came crashing down under the velocity of the winds.

"All I could see was dark. I saw the tree come down . . . I didn't see the barn come down," explained Margaret.

Neighbours Allan and Joan Poechman, however, witnessed the destruction of the Crispins' barn first hand.

"We were heading to the basement when we looked out the window and saw the barn go," Joan recalled. "We heard an awful crackling . . . the barn boards were flying off. It was just like in a movie."

The boards and scraps of the barn's metal roof were crumpled and twisted off, and were blown several feet into the field behind the house. Lawn chairs and other articles in the immediate area were also lifted off the ground and thrown. Only a portion of a straw storage barn and the silo were left standing intact.

Jeff Coulson, a warning preparedness meteorologist for Environment Canada, was on site Wednesday afternoon to confirm the cause of the damage.

"We've confirmed it as a tornado . . . a fujita scale one or possibly scale two," explained Coulson.

Coulson said the tornado struck

the Crispin property with winds gusting at 160 to 190 kilometres per hour.

Margaret said the incident happened in about 30 seconds, but the damage will take much longer to rectify.

"It's hard to see your livelihood come down like that," Margaret said. "With this shock, now we're not sure what to do. Right now, we're just picking up the pieces and moving on."

"It's frustrating because the farming has been hard as it is, and this may have finished us," added Bryan.

Margaret's parents came to check out the damage, and what they saw

stunned them. "It's such a shock," exclaimed Wilma Kerkhof, Margaret's mother. "It's unbelievable."

Bryan and Margaret and son Jorge spent the day cleaning up debris and cutting down the remains of the front tree. Bruce Tractor, where Jorge is employed, offered the family a generator to use until their power is restored.

A team of investigators from Environment Canada were called to take notes and pictures of the damage done by the storm.

The family's insurance company was contacted, but no damage estimate is available at this time.