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Ridgeland corrections officer recognized for swimming to rescue woman on flooded interstate

By wsavashleighholland



Cars floated on I-95 on Sunday, when flooding hit Ridgeland. Now, one corrections officer is being called a hero for rescuing a woman from her car as the water took it. Officer Corey Wilkinson won't accept the 'hero' title. He says it was instinct to swim out in water

up to his chest to save the woman.

Once Wilkinson's shift at the Ridgeland Correctional Institutional ended on Sunday morning, he tried to leave for home as he would on any other day; however, he quickly learned I-95 was shut down in both directions because of rising water. It was a sight he won't soon forget.

"I heard somebody say there was somebody in the water, so I pulled my car over and that's when I took off," Wilkinson says.

He waded out at first, but when the water got up to the 6' 3" man's chest, he started swimming to save time. He says there was a strong current in the 15-20 minutes he was out there, and the water was so cold it took his breath away.

"I got so light-headed. My legs were shot. I felt like I couldn't breathe. That water was so strong. I've never felt anything that strong before. It was strong," he says.

He checked three cars. In the first, he rescued a woman.

"At the very first car, there was a woman inside. She was- I don't know if she was in shock or not- but she was panicked. She was sitting up on top of her seat, water still up to her waist and would not move. I had to talk to her to try to get her out. That's when a trooper showed up, and without her I couldn't have done much of anything by myself," he says.

He found the other two vehicles empty. For this, he's glad. He says

the situation could have been worse, and he's glad there have been no reported fatalities.

"The very last car that I [saw], I saw a car seat floating and I had to say a prayer for a second. I panicked. I went inside and under the water, trying to feel around to see if I could feel anyone whatsoever, and thank God they made it out," he says.

"God works in mysterious ways, and he held everybody and their hand that day because the way it looked, there should have been people that shouldn't have made it," he says.

The other woman who assisted Wilkinson in the rescue was Trooper Burmham, but NEWS 3 could not reach her for an interview.