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**Drive to work turns scary on North Mesa**

Humberto J. Vergara / El Paso Times

It was not my normal commute to work.

And I never thought I would be one of those people who get caught in a flood and then are rescued by firefighters.

But it happened to me Tuesday morning when El Paso continued to be hit by heavy rains that caused many streets to flood.

I was rescued at North Mesa Street and Castellano Drive, an intersection I normally associate with good food at Jaxon's Original Restaurant.

When I left my apartment on Caprock Street on Tuesday morning, I knew it was going to be an adventure because of the rain. I never thought it would get as bad as it did.

Street after street on North Mesa was flooded, and my nerves were being tested.

I saw tree branches, rocks, plastic bottles and other debris being carried away by the force of water rushing down from the Franklin Mountains.

Ambulances and firetrucks were heading up and down the street. I passed a few puddles of water without problems, but when I got to Castellano and Mesa, I saw all the water gushing against the back end of Jaxon's.

I have to admit I was scared. I had never been stuck in a flood in the middle of the street or anywhere else. I pushed the gas pedal hard to see if the car would budge, but nothing happened.

At that point I thought one of my tires had blown out because the car would not move. I began to get a little stressed, I was confused, and I did not know what to do. Then self-preservation took over, and I reached for my cell phone.

I tried to remain calm.

I dialed 911. But I was nervous and all that kept going through my mind were scenes from my days in the late 1980s living in an apartment in Puerto Rico during Hurricane Hugo.

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For a moment I thought of getting out of the car to see what was wrong, but then I saw a firetruck pull up to the curb on the other side of the street and three firefighters come running toward me.

They were serious and direct, which made me feel they were in control. My confusion faded. I knew I would be all right. They said everything was going to be fine and to remain calm. All I could do was follow their orders. They told me to put my car in neutral and they started to push, but the car would not budge.

They went to the front of my car and discovered that a rock had been stuck under my front passenger-side tire. When the rock had been removed, they pushed again and I was free.

They told me to pull off and park to wait out the storm. I drove on. Looking back, it was

probably not the best decision because I saw other flooded streets.

I drove into work shaken, and I learned that I should not fool around with perilous weather.

Humberto Vergara may be reached at hvergara@elpasotimes.com; 546-6354.

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