



Reporter Michael Harris said Mayor Michael Bloomberg embarrassed him Thursday during a news conference at City Hall. City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, inset in video clip, whispers "he's disabled" to the mayor. (MICHAEL KIRBY)

'Insensitive' snafu puts heat on mayor

BY MARLENE NAANES
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Mayor Michael Bloomberg stared down and chastised a wheelchair-bound reporter after his tape recorder accidentally started playing during a news conference aired live on TV Thursday.

The mayor halted his comments about same-sex marriage legislation during a City Hall news conference held by the governor, glaring at the reporter and refusing to continue as Gov. David Paterson tried to joke about the interruption.

The reporter said he could not reach his tape recorder, which was playing an earlier news conference, because the coat it was in had been knocked off his chair by a photographer.

At one point, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn leaned over and told the mayor the reporter was disabled, to which he replied: "I understand that. He can still turn it off."

The episode showed a lack of sensitivity, disabled advocates said. The reporter

said he wants an apology.

"I was quite embarrassed," said the reporter, Michael Harris, who writes for Examiner.com and is also a disability rights advocate. "The mayor singled me out in front of my colleagues. I think an apology would be appropriate, but I'm not optimistic that the mayor's going to give one."

The mayor's office did not respond to questions about an apology.

Harris said the photographer and security guard had to get the coat so he could turn the device off.

Observers said the stand-off, which lasted more than a minute, was awkward.

"[Bloomberg] looked very obnoxious, to be honest with you," said Boris Gaviria, 33, of Forest Hills. "He's not getting my vote."

In a video of the incident, someone could be heard saying, "he's trying" while Harris went to turn the device off. The mayor responded: "Let me start again because this is too important to get disruptive."

The mayor later said Harris is a good reporter and he

SORRY MIKE

Some instances when Bloomberg apologized:

- **2007:** Told the family of Det. James Zadroga that he was sorry for calling the deceased World Trade Center worker "not a hero."
- **2007:** Apologized for keeping parking regulations during a snowstorm.
- **2004:** Made amends with the widow of Dr. Robert Atkins after calling him "fat."

would have responded the same to another reporter.

Lawrence Carter-Long, acting executive director of Disabilities Network of New York City, said he did not think the mayor was trying to be malicious.

"It appears on the surface that there could be a little more sensitivity," Carter-Long said. "I hope that everyone would learn the variables and nuances that occur within disabilities and they would educate themselves and think twice before making off-the-cuff comments."

Casey Feldman contributed to this story.

ON track

SOME OF THIS WEEKEND'S DISRUPTIONS

1 242nd Street-bound trains skip 96th Street between midnight and 5 a.m. Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

C No trains running between 12:01 a.m. Saturday and 5 a.m. Monday.

D Free shuttle buses replace trains between Bedford Park Boulevard and 205th Street between 11:30 p.m. Friday and 5 a.m. Monday.

E No trains running between West Fourth Street and World Trade Center Saturday and Sunday.

G No trains running between 71st-Continental avenues and Court Square between 8:30 p.m. Friday and 5 a.m. Monday.

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