

## **Think Before You Tweet – Fire Department New York “Yes, All of Our Diverse Citizens Matter”**

Joseph Cassano, 23, isn't the first person to lose a job over misbehavior in social media. But when Cassano resigned over racially-tinged tweets that he now admits were offensive, it made big news. That's because Cassano dreamed of following in the footsteps of his father, New York City Fire Commissioner Salvatore Cassano.

Joseph Cassano had been working for the city as a emergency medical technician for only three months when higher-ups noticed his tweets. Cassano, whose Twitter account has since been suspended, posted jokey messages about hating his job, unsavory notes about "boob jobs," and inflammatory remarks about Jews and African-Americans.

He tweeted, "I like jews about as much as Hitler #toofar? NOPE," reported CBS New York. And, "Getting sick of all these obama lovers taking them to the hospital because their medicare pays for an ambulance and not a cab"

Even Mayor Bloomberg publicly commented on the matter, saying that he found Joseph Cassano's tweets "offensive."

On Monday, Joseph Cassano apologized in a written statement: "From the bottom of my heart, I'm truly sorry and I apologize for my offensive remarks. My intention was never to hurt anyone, or any group, and these tasteless comments do not reflect the person my parents raised me to be."

He then resigned. His father, Salvatore Cassano, a Vietnam veteran who over his four-decade firefighting career is credited with saving many lives and has won numerous medals for bravery, released a statement of his own.

"I am extremely disappointed in the comments posted online by my son, Joseph, which do not reflect the values -- including a respect for all people -- that are held by men, my family and the FDNY," he said. "... As a parent, this is very painful for me, but I believe my son has made the right decision."

The incident is particularly embarrassing because the fire department has been embroiled in a racial controversy of its own. For years, the Vulcan Society, the city's black firefighters' association, has accused the department of rampant racism. Last year, a judge ruled that the Fire Department of New York had racially discriminatory hiring practices, and found the city liable for wage losses of almost \$130 million for all the black and Latino applicants who were wrongfully denied jobs.

The commissioner slammed the ruling at the time, stating, "I've been in the department 42 years, I've never seen intentional discrimination."

Members of the Vulcan Society believe young Cassano's tweeting has undermined his father's credibility. "I wonder where young Cassano got such thinking?" John Coombs of the Vulcan Society told CBS New York. "I wonder where he found the courage to tweet what he tweeted, to make comments about people he was supposedly serving."