

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

SERGIO G RANGEL
Claimant

TMONE LLC
Employer

APPEAL NO. 14A-UI-06737-MT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 06/01/14
Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated June 18, 2014, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on August 12, 2014. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Lindsey Sinn, Employee Connections Manager.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on May 28, 2014.

Employer discharged claimant on June 2, 2014 because claimant allegedly engaged in a fight with a coworker. Claimant was upset with a coworker's racial and hateful statements. Claimant reported the harassment to two managers. Claimant went to get his stuff from his desk and take a break so as to cool off. Claimant went by the offensive coworker's desk on the way out. The coworker jumped up and chest bumped claimant. No fists were thrown. Claimant did not start the fight, he furthered the incident by walking by the coworker's desk. Employer informed claimant that any fighting would result in discharge. Employer had not warned claimant about fighting.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation.

In this matter, the evidence failed to established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning fighting. Claimant was not warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because claimant did not start the fight. The coworker jumped up and chest bumped claimant. The only mistake claimant made was to take a path by the coworker's desk. The fact that claimant reported the incident to two supervisors detracts from a finding of an intentional act. This is an isolated instance of poor judgment on a clean record of employment. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated June 18, 2014, reference 01, is reversed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

Marlon Mormann
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

mdm/pjs