

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

JASON C SYMMONDS
Claimant

PLAZA AUTO AUCTION INC
Employer

APPEAL 14R-UI-06991-LT
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 03/23/14
Claimant: Appellant (6)

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

An appeal was filed from an unemployment insurance decision dated April 15, 2014 (reference 01) that denied benefits based upon a discharge from employment. Notice of hearing was mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 2:00 p.m. on July 28, 2014. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system after 3:00 p.m. the same day shows the claimant/appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice instruction and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the scheduled hearing and no hearing was held. This is the second time the appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice instructions, see Appeal No. 14A-UI-04262-LT.

ISSUE:

Should the appeal be dismissed based upon the appellant not being available to participate in the scheduled hearing?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The party was properly notified of the scheduled hearing on this appeal. The appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice instruction and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the scheduled hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

Official notice of the Clear2there hearing control screen is taken to establish that appellant did not call or register online with the Appeals Bureau to provide a telephone number and/or name of a representative.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advises parties, "If you do not participate in the hearing because you do not register for the hearing, register late, or cannot be reached at the number you provided when the judge calls for the hearing, the appeal may be dismissed or decided based on other available evidence."

As a *courtesy* to the appellant the record was left open for a minimum of 15 minutes after the hearing start time to give the appellant a *reasonable* opportunity to participate. This reasonable amount of time is appropriate because if a hearing were conducted with the non-appealing party alone it would have likely concluded in 15 minutes or less. Allowing additional time would prejudice the non-appealing party for appearing in a timely manner. The 15-minute wait time is also a reasonable period to hold the record open as insufficient time would remain to conduct a quality due process hearing in the time allotted by the Appeals Bureau. Each two-party hearing is allowed 60 minutes and a one-party hearing allowed 30 minutes. Holding the appellant in default for failure to appear and participate during a 15-minute window after the hearing start time is entirely reasonable considering the time allocated for unemployment hearings.

The representative's decision concluded that the claimant/appellant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code § 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire *ex parte* as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of

hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.

c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record. (Emphasis added.)

Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to the parties. *This rule does not provide exceptions for good intentions and/or a party contacting the Appeals Bureau within a reasonable amount of time after the hearing is scheduled.* It can be assumed an appellant intends to participate in the hearing simply by the fact an appeal is filed, but their responsibility does not end there and *all* parties are required to follow the specific written instructions printed on the hearing notice. Due process does not require the non appealing party and the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau to wait for indefinite periods see if an appellant wants or remembers to prosecute the appeal. The appellant filed the appeal and is held solely responsible for going forward with the case in an expeditious manner. The rule holds appellant in default if not present *at the start* of the hearing. As a *courtesy*, appellant was granted additional time not required by statute or rule. Here, notwithstanding additional time, notice and opportunity, the appellant failed to prosecute the case expeditiously and as such the appellant is in default and the appeal shall be dismissed. Iowa Code §17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 24.14(7). The representative's decision remains in force and effect.

Pursuant to the rule, the appellant must make a written request to the administrative law judge that the hearing be reopened within 15 days after the mailing date of this decision. The written request should be mailed to the administrative law judge at the address listed at the end of this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the appellant from participating in the hearing at its scheduled time. The appellant also has the option to appeal the decision directly to the Employment Appeal Board, whose address is listed at the top right caption.

DECISION:

The appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed. The unemployment insurance decision dated April 15, 2014 (reference 01) denying benefits remains in effect.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
Iowa Workforce Development
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax 515-242-5144

Decision Dated and Mailed

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