

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

JORDAN L WRIGHT
Claimant

SEDONA STAFFING INC
Employer

APPEAL NO. 21A-UI-02972-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 07/05/20
Claimant: Respondent (2R)

Iowa Code Section 96.6-2 - Timeliness of Protest

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the January 7, 2021, reference 06, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant provided he was otherwise eligible, that held the employer's account could be charged for benefits, and that held the employer's protest could not be considered because it was untimely. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone on March 12, 2021. The claimant did not respond to the hearing notice instructions to register a telephone number for the hearing and did not participate. Colleen McGuinty represented the employer. Exhibits 1, 2 and 3 were received into evidence.

ISSUE:

Whether the employer's protest of the claim for benefits was timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: On July 14, 2020, Iowa Workforce Development mailed a notice of claim concerning the above claimant to the employer's address of record. The notice of claim contained a warning that any protest must be postmarked, faxed or returned by the due date set forth on the notice, which was July 24, 2020. The notice of claim was received at the employer's address of record in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for protest. On July 16, 2020, Colleen McGuinty, Unemployment Benefits Administrator, completed the employer's protest information on the notice of claim form and signed to certify the accuracy of the information provided. On July 17, 2020, the employer faxed the protest to Iowa Workforce Development Unemployment Insurance Service Center at one of the designated fax numbers. The employer has provided a fax transmission record that reflects successful transmission of the protest to IWD at 10:49 a.m. on July 17, 2020. The employer submitted the protest in this matter as part of a packet of protests for various claimants that totaled 12 pages. The weight of the evidence indicates that IWD received the protest on July 17, 2020 but misplaced it after it was received. The employer returned to the matter after the employer received a statement of charges that IWD mailed to the employer on November 9, 2020. On December 8, 2020, Ms. McGuinty contacted the IWD Tax Bureau to contest the charge to the employer's account.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant.

Another portion of this same Code section dealing with timeliness of an appeal from a representative's decision states that such an appeal must be filed within ten days after notification of that decision was mailed. In addressing an issue of timeliness of an appeal under that portion of this Code section, the Iowa Supreme Court held that this statute prescribing the time for notice of appeal clearly limits the time to do so, and that compliance with the appeal notice provision is mandatory and jurisdictional. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979). The administrative law judge considers the reasoning and holding of the court to be controlling on this portion of that same Iowa Code section which deals with a time limit in which to file a protest after notification of the filing of the claim has been mailed.

Iowa Administrative Code Rule 871-24.8(2)(a) and (b) provide as follows:

- (2) Responding by employing units to a notice of the filing of an initial claim or a request for wage and separation information and protesting the payment of benefits.
 - a. The employing unit which receives a Form 65-5317, Notice of Claim, or a Form 68-0221, Request for Wage and Separation Information, must, within ten days of the date of the notice or request, submit to the department wage or separation information that affects the individual's rights to benefits, including any facts which disclose that the individual separated from employment voluntarily and without good cause attributable to the employer or was discharged for misconduct in connection with employment.
 - b. The employing unit may protest the payment of benefits if the protest is postmarked within ten days of the date of the notice of the filing of an initial claim. In the event that the tenth day falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the protest period is extended to the next working day of the department. If the employing unit has filed a timely report of facts that might adversely affect the individual's benefit rights, the report shall be considered as a protest to the payment of benefits.

Iowa Administrative Code Rule 871-24.35(1) provides:

Date of submission and extension of time for payments and notices.

- (1) Except as otherwise provided by statute or by division rule, any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document submitted to the division shall be considered received by and filed with the division:
 - a. If transmitted via the United States Postal Service on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark, or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it is received; or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion.

- b. If transmitted via the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES), maintained by the United States Department of Labor, on the date it was submitted to SIDES.
- c. If transmitted by any means other than those outlined in paragraphs 24.35(1)"a" and "b", on the date it is received by the division.

Iowa Administrative Code Rule 871-24.35(2) provides:

Date of submission and extension of time for payments and notices.

(2) The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

a. For submission that is not within the statutory or regulatory period to be considered timely, the interested party must submit a written explanation setting forth the circumstances of the delay.

b. The division shall designate personnel who are to decide whether an extension of time shall be granted.

c. No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the department after considering the circumstances in the case.

d. If submission is not considered timely, although the interested party contends that the delay was due to division error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States postal service, the division shall issue an appealable decision to the interested party.

The weight of the evidence establishes that the employer faxed a timely protest to IWD on July 17, 2020, but that IWD misplaced the protest and failed to docket the protest when it was received. The administrative law judge notes that IWD was exceptionally busy with claims at the time the employer filed its packet of protests on July 17, 2020. The volume of claims being handled by IWD likely contributed to the Agency's misplacement of the employer's timely protest. Because the protest was timely, and because the late docketing of the protest was attributable to IWD, this matter will be remanded to the Benefits Bureau for a fact-finding interview concerning the separation that occurred on or about February 12, 2020.

DECISION:

The January 7, 2021, reference 06, decision is reversed. The employer's protest was timely. This matter is remanded to the Benefits Bureau for a fact-finding interview concerning the separation that occurred on or about February 12, 2020.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James E. Timberland". The signature is written in black ink on a light gray rectangular background.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

March 16, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/mh