

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

GEORGE Z BAK
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 08A-UI-10749-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

HOLIDAY INN – BETTENDORF
Employer

OC: 09/14/08 R: 04
Claimant: Respondent (2-R)

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Leaving
Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the November 5, 2008, reference 02, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on December 3, 2008. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Connie Schlicting, general manager; Christy Sprunger; and Diana Hagner, human resources representative; and was represented by Pixie Allan of Unemployment Insurance Services.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether claimant quit the employment without good cause attributable to the employer or if he was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits and, if so, whether he is overpaid benefits as a result.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was hired as a full-time housekeeping inspector and worked from November 12, 2003 until September 20, 2008, when he quit. After a meeting on September 16 about an executive housekeeper supervisor salaried position, claimant became upset when he learned that Sprunger and others had applied for the job that he believed he would get because of his past work experience. He confronted Sprunger on September 16 after the meeting when he learned that she had applied for the job and again on September 17, in the executive suite area, asked her why she had applied for the job, stating, "It's my job." Sprunger reported the encounters to Schlicting, who asked claimant about the issue. He admitted talking to Sprunger about the job and Schlicting sent him home for the day because of his "attitude." Claimant interpreted this as being discharged but did not verify this with Schlicting or any other member of management. Employer considered him to have voluntarily left the employment after he was a no-call, no-show on September 18, 19, and 20, 2008.

The claimant has received unemployment benefits since filing a claim with an effective date of September 14, 2008.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was not discharged but voluntarily left his employment without good cause attributable to the employer.

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 Code § 96.5-1 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act of carrying out that intention. *Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer*, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980). The claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Iowa Code § 96.6(2) (amended 1998). Generally, when an individual mistakenly believes they are discharged from employment but was not told so by the employer and they discontinue reporting for work, the separation is considered a quit without good cause attributable to the employer.

Since claimant assumed Schlichting fired him when she sent him home for the day because of his confrontation of a coworker and competitor for a promotion, did not follow up to verify whether or not he was fired, and discontinued reporting for work without further communication, his actions are considered an abandonment of his job. Benefits are denied.

The administrative law judge further concludes claimant has been overpaid benefits.

Iowa Code § 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment

compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Because claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which claimant was not entitled. The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment may not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. If so, the employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3(7). In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. The matter of whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

DECISION:

The November 5, 2008, reference 02, decision is reversed. The claimant voluntarily left employment without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$3,322.00.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/kjw