

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

ASHLEY L BELTZ
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-10390-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WESTAR FOODS INC
Employer

OC: 06/02/13
Claimant: Appellant (1-R)

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.8(5) – Decision on the Record

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

An appeal was filed from an unemployment insurance decision dated July 8, 2013, (reference 02) that denied benefits. A telephone hearing was scheduled for October 7, 2013. The appellant did not respond to the hearing notice instructions. Based on the appellant's failure to participate, a review of the administrative file, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law and decision. Department's Exhibit D-1 was received. The appellant called after the hearing record had been closed, and had not followed the hearing notice instructions pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7)a-c.

ISSUES:

Should the hearing record be reopened?

Should the representative's decision be affirmed?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the available evidence in the administrative record, the administrative law judge finds: The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing on this appeal. As shown on Department's Exhibit 1, there is not a phone number listed for the appellant. This means she failed, prior to the hearing date and time, to provide a telephone number at which she could be reached for the hearing and did not participate or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice instructions. The instructions inform the parties that if the party does not contact the Appeals Bureau and provide the phone number at which the party can be contacted for the hearing, the party will not be called for the hearing. The first time the appellant directly contacted the Appeals Bureau was on October 7, 2013, after the scheduled start time for the hearing and after the record had been closed. The appellant had not read the information on the hearing notice, and had assumed that the Appeals Bureau would initiate the telephone contact even without a response to the hearing notice.

The administrative law judge has conducted a review of the available administrative file to determine whether the unemployment insurance decision should be affirmed.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The first issue in this case is whether the appellant's request to reopen the hearing should be granted or denied.

871 IAC 26.14(7) provides:

(7) If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals section with the names and telephone numbers of its witnesses by the scheduled time of the hearing, the presiding officer may proceed with 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 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.

The first time the appellant called the Appeals Bureau for the hearing was after the record had been closed. Although the appellant may have intended to participate in the hearing, the appellant failed to read or follow the hearing notice instructions and did not contact the Appeals Bureau as directed prior to the hearing. The rule specifically states that failure to read or follow the instructions on the hearing notice does not constitute good cause to reopen the hearing. The appellant did not establish good cause to reopen the hearing. Therefore, the appellant's request to reopen the hearing is denied.

The administrative law judge has carefully reviewed the available evidence in the administrative record and concludes that the unemployment insurance decision previously entered in this case is correct and should be affirmed. Claimant did not present evidence of her ability to work as is her burden. However, the employer protested the separation as a voluntary quit. The administrative record reflects that the issue has not yet been decided at the Claims level.

871 IAC 26.8(3), (4) and (5) provide:

Withdrawals and postponements.

(3) If, due to emergency or other good cause, a party, having received due notice, is unable to attend a hearing or request postponement within the prescribed time, the presiding officer may, if no decision has been issued, reopen the record and, with notice to all parties, schedule another hearing. If a decision has been issued, the decision may be vacated upon the presiding officer's own motion or at the request of a party within

15 days after the mailing date of the decision and in the absence of an appeal to the employment appeal board of the department of inspections and appeals. If a decision is vacated, notice shall be given to all parties of a new hearing to be held and decided by another presiding officer. Once a decision has become final as provided by statute, the presiding officer has no jurisdiction to reopen the record or vacate the decision.

(4) A request to reopen a record or vacate a decision may be heard ex parte by the presiding officer. The granting or denial of such a request may be used as a grounds for appeal to the employment appeal board of the department of inspections and appeals upon the issuance of the presiding officer's final decision in the case.

(5) If good cause for postponement or reopening has not been shown, the presiding officer shall make a decision based upon whatever evidence is properly in the record.

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 beginning 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.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated July 8, 2013, (reference 02) is affirmed. The record shall not be reopened and the representative's decision remains in effect.

REMAND: The July 10, 2012, separation issue has not been determined and is remanded to the Claims Section of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and determination.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/css