

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

JOSE B AVILES-AMAYA
Claimant

PALMER & COMPANY
Employer

APPEAL NO. 16A-UI-10625-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 09/11/16
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated September 26, 2016, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on October 12, 2016. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Hanna Reinders, Patty West, Israel Gonzalez, and Tommy Dawdy. Interpretive Services were provided by CTS Language Link.

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 September 12, 2016. Employer discharged claimant on September 12, 2016 because claimant had threatened coworkers after he was suspended for sexually harassing other coworkers.

Employer stated that on September 10, 2016 the plant manager was informed that claimant had allegations of sexual harassment made against. Employer was going to further investigate the situation, but was suspending claimant during that investigation. Employer explained to claimant this action through an interpreter. Employer then walked claimant to the exit. While walking to the exit, claimant looked at the person he was accused of harassing and uttered a sentence in Spanish. After finishing walking claimant out, the supervisor immediately found the interpreter and went back to the frightened woman and asked her what claimant had told her. The woman stated, "Martin is going to pay for this if he was involved, and you are going to pay for this if you were involved."

Employer interpreted this statement as a threat and terminated claimant after further investigation. Employer has a zero tolerance policy on threats.

Claimant denied he'd made any sexually harassing statements and further stated that it was actually his supervisor. Claimant denied making the subsequent threats to his coworkers.

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).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

In order to establish misconduct as to disqualify a former employee from benefits an employer must establish the employee was responsible for a deliberate act or omission which was a material breach of the duties and obligations owed by the employee to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d 445 (Iowa 1979); *Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). The conduct must show a 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 the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon supra*; *Henry supra*.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. In this matter, the evidence establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning threats to coworkers. The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant's threats raised fear in his coworkers in violation of employer policies. Threats of violence are not to be tolerated by businesses. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated September 26, 2016, reference 01, is affirmed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/rvs