

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

DENNIS A GIGAROA
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-06545-H2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

S H I INC
Employer

OC: 05-06-12
Claimant: Respondent (2-R)

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 May 29, 2012, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on July 23, 2012. The claimant did participate along with his witness, Bill Conger, chief of police of Kahoka, Missouri. The employer did participate through (representative) Ryan Swalve, president, and Chad Kain, dispatcher. Claimant's Exhibit A was entered and received into the record.

ISSUES:

Was the claimant discharged due to job-connected misconduct?

Has the claimant been overpaid any unemployment insurance benefits?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a truck driver, full-time, beginning in June 2011 through May 4, 2012, when he was discharged. The claimant was involved in an accident that was his fault where he hit a car driven by an 85-year-old woman. While at the scene of the accident, the claimant learned from the police chief that the woman was going to be taken by ambulance for medical treatment. He called the employer and spoke first to dispatcher Chad Kain and then to Mr. Swalve. The claimant did not tell either Mr. Kain or Mr. Swalve that the driver of the car had been injured and was being taken for medical treatment. The claimant had been given the employer's handbook and knew that reporting a personal injury to anyone was crucial to the employer. The claimant had previously been disciplined for failing to report pertinent details to the employer when he received a speeding ticket in September 2011 and did not report it to the employer until the employer received paperwork because their truck was involved.

The only way the employer found out that the other driver had been hurt was when her son called Mr. Swalve the next day to complain about the claimant and to report that his Mother was still in the hospital. Mr. Swalve immediately contacted the claimant, who admitted he knew that the woman was going to be taken by ambulance to be "checked out" by medical professionals.

When Mr. Swalve asked the claimant why he had not told him about the woman needing medical treatment, the claimant indicated he had tried to tell him but Mr. Swalve had not let him. Then the claimant said that he did not think the woman needed to go to the hospital because he did not think she was hurt. The Administrative Law Judge is persuaded that the claimant never told Mr. Swalve that the passenger had been injured and that she was being taken anywhere for any kind of treatment.

The claimant has received unemployment benefits after the separation on a claim with an effective date of May 6, 2012.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct.

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.

871 IAC 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.

Generally, continued refusal to follow reasonable instructions constitutes misconduct. *Gilliam v. Atlantic Bottling Company*, 453 N.W.2d 230 (Iowa App. 1990). The claimant never reported the crucial detail about the accident to the employer that the other driver was being taken by ambulance for medical treatment. The claimant had previously been disciplined for similar conduct when he failed to report details about a speeding ticket he received. The Administrative Law Judge is persuaded that the claimant knew or should have known that the employer would

need information about injuries. The employer only found out because the injured woman's son called him the next day. In light of the claimant's previous discipline for similar conduct, the Administrative Law Judge concludes he was discharged due to job-connected misconduct sufficient to disqualify him from receipt of benefits. Benefits are denied.

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 the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the 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 will 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. 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.

DECISION:

The May 29, 2012 (reference 01) decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. 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.

REMAND:

The matter of determining the amount of the potential overpayment and whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

Teresa K. Hillary
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

tkh/kjw