

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

NATHAN L WEEKS

Claimant

BRIDGE CITY MECHANICAL INC

Employer

APPEAL 21A-UI-19100-AD-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 06/13/21

Claimant: Respondent (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct

Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 – Employer/Representative Participation Fact-finding Interview

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On August 27, 2021, Bridge City Mechanical Inc (employer/respondent) filed an appeal from the August 24, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based on a finding that claimant was discharged on May 30, 2021 without a showing of misconduct.

A telephone hearing was held on October 20, 2021. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. Employer participated by Owner Martin Kauzlarich. Nathan Weeks (claimant/respondent) did not register a number for the hearing or participate.

Employer's Exhibits 1 and 2 were admitted. Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

ISSUE(S):

- I. Was the separation a layoff, discharge for misconduct, or voluntary quit without good cause?
- II. Was the claimant overpaid benefits? Should claimant repay benefits and/or charge employer due to employer participation in fact finding?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

Claimant's first day of employment was December 2015. The last day claimant worked on the job was May 23, 2021. Claimant worked for employer at that time as a full-time welder. Claimant's schedule was Thursday through Sunday. Claimant asked to take off May 26-30, 2021 a couple weeks prior to that timeframe. Claimant's supervisor denied the request, as claimant was needed during that time to assist with a major project. Claimant left with his tools on May 23, 2021 and did not appear for work or call in to report his absences after that date. Claimant did not attempt to return to work after that.

The unemployment insurance system shows claimant has received weekly benefits in the amount of \$605.00 for a total of one week, the benefit week ending June 19, 2021. The administrative record indicates that no fact-finding interview was scheduled or held prior and no further information requested from employer prior to the decision allowing benefits being issued.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons set forth below, the August 24, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based on a finding that claimant was discharged on May 30, 2021 without a showing of misconduct is REVERSED.

- I. Was the separation a layoff, discharge for misconduct, or voluntary quit without good cause?

Iowa Code section 96.5(1) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

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.

Claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Iowa Code § 96.6(2). The employer has the burden of proving that a claimant's departure from employment was voluntary. *Irving v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 883 N.W.2d 179 (Iowa 2016). "In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer". *Id.* (citing *Cook v. Iowa Dept. of Job Service*, 299 N.W.2d 698, 701 (Iowa 1980)).

"Good cause" for leaving employment must be that which is reasonable to the average person, not to the overly sensitive individual or the claimant in particular. *Uniweld Products v. Industrial Relations Commission*, 277 S.2d 827 (Florida App. 1973). While a notice of intent to quit is not required to obtain unemployment benefits where the claimant quits due to intolerable or detrimental working conditions, the case for good cause is stronger where the employee complains, asks for correction or accommodation, and employer fails to respond. *Hy-Vee Inc. v. EAB*, 710 N.W.2d 1 (Iowa 2005).

Iowa unemployment insurance law disqualifies claimants who voluntarily quit employment without good cause attributable to the employer or who are discharged for work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code §§ 96.5(1) and 96.5(2)a. A voluntary quitting of employment requires that an employee exercise a voluntary choice between remaining employed or terminating the employment relationship. *Wills v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 447 N.W.2d 137, 138 (Iowa 1989); *Peck v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 492 N.W.2d 438, 440 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992). 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).

Employer has carried its burden of proving claimant's departure from employment was voluntary. However, claimant has not carried his burden of proving the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to employer. The administrative law judge finds claimant abandoned his job by being absent for several days in a row without notice or permission. He chose to take time off despite

his request to do so being denied. This is not a good cause reason for quitting attributable to employer. Benefits are therefore denied.

- II. Was the claimant overpaid benefits? Should claimant repay benefits and/or charge employer due to employer participation in fact finding?

Iowa Code section 96.3(7) provides, in pertinent part:

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) (a) 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.

(b) 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if unrebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871—subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting

detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

The unemployment insurance system shows claimant has received weekly benefits in the amount of \$605.00 for a total of one week, the benefit week ending June 19, 2021. Because the administrative law judge now finds claimant disqualified from benefits, he has been overpaid in that amount.

Because employer did not participate in a fact-finding interview within the meaning of Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 and the overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment, benefits shall not be recovered from claimant. However, neither shall employer be charged, as the failure to participate was due to no fault of its own. The overpayment shall instead be charged to the unemployment insurance compensation fund.

DECISION:

The August 24, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based on a finding that claimant was discharged on May 30, 2021 without a showing of misconduct is REVERSED. The separation from employment was disqualifying. The disqualification shall continue until claimant earns wages equal to ten times the weekly benefit amount.

Claimant has been overpaid benefits in the amount of \$605.00. For the reasons set forth above, benefits shall not be recovered and employer shall not be charged. The overpayment shall be charged to the fund.



Andrew B. Duffelmeyer
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
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Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax (515) 478-3528

October 28, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

abd/ja

Note to Claimant:

If you disagree with this decision, you may file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. If this decision denies benefits, you may be responsible for paying back benefits already received.

Individuals who are disqualified from or are otherwise ineligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits but who are unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.