

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

CLINT PAPESH

Claimant

FAREWAY STORES INC

Employer

APPEAL NO. 14A-UI-06517-GT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 05/25/14

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 June 13, 2014, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on July 15, 2014. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Maggie Worrall, Training and Development Specialist. Exhibits One through Four were admitted into evidence.

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 May 29, 2014. Employer discharged claimant on May 29, 2014 because claimant had embellished the amount of time he was spending at various branch locations. On May 19, 2014 claimant recorded that he had spent four hours working at store, but he was actually only there for about 20 minutes. On May 20, 2014 claimant indicated that he was in the Pella store from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., but he was actually only there for 15 minutes. When management approached claimant about the discrepancies he admitted to being an hour or two off. He corrected his time sheet for those dates. Claimant had been warned about keeping accurate time logs in April 2014. He was reminded and referred to the employee handbook which indicates that falsification of any documents including employee hours could lead to termination of employment.

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).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4), (8) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation. The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that one unexcused absence is not misconduct even when it followed nine other excused absences and was in violation of a direct order. Sallis v. EAB, 437 N.W.2d 895 (Iowa 1989). Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984), held that the absences must be both excessive and unexcused. The Iowa Supreme Court has held that excessive is more than one. Three incidents of tardiness or absenteeism after a warning has been held misconduct. Clark v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 317 N.W.2d 517 (Iowa Ct. App. 1982). While three is a reasonable interpretation of excessive based on current case law and Webster's Dictionary, the interpretation is best derived from the facts presented.

Misconduct must be "substantial" to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv., 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Id.* Negligence does not constitute misconduct unless recurrent in nature; a single act is not disqualifying unless indicative of a deliberate disregard of the employer's interests. Henry v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv., 391 N.W.2d 731 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. Miller v. Emp't Appeal Bd., 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning keeping honest and accurate time sheets. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because employee's actions were deliberate, intentional, and contrary to employer's interest. 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 June 13, 2014, 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.

Duane L. Golden
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

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