

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**AMY S RHODD**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-12422-LT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**PRAIRIE MEADOWS RACETRACK  
& CASINO INC**  
Employer

**OC: 08/28/11  
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

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

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed an appeal from the September 16, 2011 (reference 01) decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call on October 13, 2011. Claimant participated. Employer participated through human resources generalist, Tracey Casey.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether claimant was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full time as a table games supervisor from November 2004 and was separated from employment on August 28, 2011. On August 17, 2011 she was accused of yelling across the pit to another supervisor about wanting to take her break before another supervisor. She did not yell, but from across a small aisle, she got another supervisor's attention to motion for her to come over to relieve her for break. On August 1, 2011 she was warned about the content of her Facebook page but the employer is not sure if the comments were work related. She deactivated her account until after her separation. In June 2010 she was coached about "inappropriate" comments made on the floor. No details about the comments were available. In December 2010 she was warned for not following a management decision. The employer did not have details about the management decision issue.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

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.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. IDJS*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. IDJS*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984).

In an at-will employment environment an employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job-related misconduct as the reason for the separation, employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation. The conduct for which claimant was discharged was reasonable given the circumstances. The employer did not adequately rebut claimant's reasonable and credible explanation of the circumstances and has not met the burden of proof to establish that claimant acted deliberately or with recurrent negligence in violation of company policy, procedure, or prior warning. Benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The September 16, 2011 (reference 01) decision is affirmed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed.

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Dévon M. Lewis  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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