

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

SHEILA SCHOENHERR

Claimant

APPEAL NO: 15A-UI-00715-ET

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WHIRLPOOL CORPORATION

Employer

OC: 12/07/14

Claimant: Appellant (2)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the January 8, 2015, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on February 10, 2015. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer did not respond to the hearing notice by providing a phone number where it could be reached at the date and time of the hearing as evidenced by the absence of a name and phone number on the Clear2There screen showing whether the parties have called in for the hearing as instructed by the hearing notice. The employer did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice. Claimant's Exhibit A was admitted into evidence.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a full-time assembler for Whirlpool Corporation from July 9, 2012 to November 25, 2014. She was discharged for not having harmonious relationships with others and after being accused of calling her supervisor a "bitch" and stating she was going to go "postal" on her.

On July 22, 2014, the claimant received a first written warning for failing to have harmonious relationships with others. On October 14, 2014, the claimant received a second written warning and a three-day suspension for spreading false reports and failing to maintain harmonious relationships with others.

On November 13, 2014, the claimant was placed on an indefinite suspension pending investigation regarding a conversation she was alleged to have with a co-worker where she stated, "How come you can get away with saying 'bitch' to (supervisor) and not get suspended but when I say it I get suspended?" The employer notified the claimant her employment was terminated November 25, 2014.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the 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.

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).

The employer has the burden of proving disqualifying misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

While the claimant agrees she had some personality conflicts with some of her co-workers, she denies being the source of all of the problems with relationships at the plant or that she asked a co-worker why he could get away with calling their supervisor a bitch and when she did it she was suspended, the last accusation of which resulted in her termination.

When misconduct is alleged as the reason for the discharge and subsequent disqualification of benefits, it is incumbent upon the employer to present evidence in support of its allegations. Allegations of misconduct without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. 871 IAC 24.32(4). The employer did not participate in the hearing and failed to provide any evidence. The evidence provided by the claimant does not rise to the level of disqualifying job misconduct as that term is defined by Iowa law. The employer has not met its burden of proof. Therefore, benefits must be allowed.

DECISION:

The January 8, 2015, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

Julie Elder
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

je/pjs