

**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

NICHOLAS SCHUMACHER
Claimant

MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY
Employer

APPEAL 25A-UI-02231-AR

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 02/23/25
Claimant: Appellant (2)**

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On March 19, 2025, the claimant filed an appeal from the March 12, 2025, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based on the determination that claimant was discharged from employment due to disqualifying misconduct. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. An in-person hearing was held in Des Moines, Iowa, on April 14, 2025. Claimant, Nicholas Schumacher, participated. Employer, Midamerican Energy Company, participated through HR Business Partner Brad DeBoer. Employer's Exhibits 1 through 5 were admitted.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant began working for employer on July 19, 2012. Claimant last worked as a full-time crew leader - gas. Claimant was separated from employment on February 19, 2025, when he was discharged.

On February 6, 2025, claimant was exiting his vehicle in the employer's parking lot when he slipped because it was icy that morning. He braced himself against his car, but he still injured his foot. Specifically, he injured his toe on his left foot. As he left the car, he was limping.

Once he got inside, he told his supervisor about the incident. He told his supervisor the parking lot had been icy and he had slipped. He visited the nurse, who iced the foot. Claimant also filled out an incident report regarding the incident. The nurse asked claimant if he wished to see the doctor, and claimant stated he would like to see the doctor because he was worried his toe was dislocated. Claimant then took half of February 6, 2025, and all of February 7, 2025, off, to address the foot.

On February 10, 2025, claimant was asked to fill out another incident report; he did so. He reported essentially the same information as he had on February 6, 2025. The employer conducted an investigation in which they reviewed the surveillance video and interviewed claimant. Claimant continued to state that he slipped on the ice and injured his foot on February 6, 2025. However, when the employer reviewed the video footage, it did not see him slip. The surveillance camera footage was taken while it was still dark outside, claimant was wearing a black shirt, and was positioned a long distance from the camera and against a black vehicle. The employer concluded that claimant had been dishonest when he alleged he had slipped on the ice on the employer's premises. After a predisciplinary meeting in which claimant was informed that the incident might result in his discharge, the employer concluded that discharge was the appropriate course of conduct. The employer discharged claimant from employment on February 19, 2025, due to violation of its code of conduct. Claimant had not received any prior disciplinary warnings of any kind.

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 section 96.5(2)(a) and (d) provide:

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 disqualification shall continue 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.

...

d. For the purposes of this subsection, "*misconduct*" means a deliberate act or omission by an employee that constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of the employee's contract of employment. Misconduct is 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 even 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. Misconduct by an individual includes but is not limited to all of the following:

(1) Material falsification of the individual's employment application.

(2) Knowing violation of a reasonable and uniformly enforced rule of an employer.

(3) Intentional damage of an employer's property.

(4) Consumption of alcohol, illegal or nonprescribed prescription drugs, or an impairing substance in a manner not directed by the manufacturer, or a combination of such substances, on the employer's premises in violation of the employer's employment policies.

(5) Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol, illegal or nonprescribed prescription drugs, or an impairing substance in an off-label manner, or a combination of such substances, on the employer's premises in violation of the employer's employment policies, unless the individual is compelled to work by the employer outside of scheduled or on-call working hours.

(6) Conduct that substantially and unjustifiably endangers the personal safety of coworkers or the general public.

(7) Incarceration for an act for which one could reasonably expect to be incarcerated that results in missing work.

(8) Incarceration as a result of a misdemeanor or felony conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction.

(9) Excessive unexcused tardiness or absenteeism.

(10) Falsification of any work-related report, task, or job that could expose the employer or coworkers to legal liability or sanction for violation of health or safety laws.

(11) Failure to maintain any license, registration, or certification that is reasonably required by the employer or by law, or that is a functional requirement to perform the individual's regular job duties, unless the failure is not within the control of the individual.

(12) Conduct that is libelous or slanderous toward an employer or an employee of the employer if such conduct is not protected under state or federal law.

(13) Theft of an employer or coworker's funds or property.

(14) Intentional misrepresentation of time worked or work carried out that results in the individual receiving unearned wages or unearned benefits.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6, 11 (Iowa 1982).

A determination as to whether an employee's act is misconduct does not rest solely on the interpretation or application of the employer's policy or rule. A violation is not necessarily disqualifying misconduct even if the employer was fully within its rights to impose discipline up to or including discharge for the incident under its policy. 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262, 264 (Iowa Ct. 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679, 680 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. *Myers v. Emp. Appeal Bd.*, 462 N.W.2d 734, 737 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee.

Dishonesty, even in one instance, could constitute disqualifying misconduct. However, the administrative law judge concludes that the employer has not carried its burden of establishing that claimant was dishonest when he reported the foot injury. The video provided by the employer clearly shows claimant limping away from his vehicle. Claimant had not been limping prior to arriving to work and exiting the car. The surveillance video is not, however, clear enough to clearly interpret the events that preceded the limping. Claimant is in a black shirt against a black vehicle, and it is dark outside, lit only by the lights in the parking lot. Claimant is also positioned a fair distance from the camera. Claimant has maintained throughout both the end of the employment and the unemployment insurance process that he slipped and injured himself. The administrative law judge cannot conclude that the employer's offered surveillance footage rebuts claimant's consistent assertions. The employer has not carried its burden of establishing that claimant was discharged for disqualifying misconduct. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

DECISION:

The March 12, 2025, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is REVERSED. Claimant was discharged from employment on February 19, 2025, for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.



Alexis D. Rowe
Administrative Law Judge

April 15, 2025
Decision Dated and Mailed

AR/jkb

APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Iowa Employment Appeal Board
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may then file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If no one files an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at Iowa Code §17A.19, which is online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> or by contacting the District Court Clerk of Court <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

Note to Parties: YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

Note to Claimant: It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

SERVICE INFORMATION:

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN. Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Iowa Employment Appeal Board
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Fax: (515)281-7191
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal.

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si nadie presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelaciones Laborales dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en acción final de la agencia y usted tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días después de que la decisión adquiriera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que se encuentra en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> o comunicándose con el Tribunal de Distrito Secretario del tribunal <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

Nota para las partes: USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.