

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

LEROY MILLER
Claimant

HEARTLAND EXPRESS INC OF IOWA
Employer

APPEAL NO. 18A-UI-05144-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 03/04/18
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 April 25, 2018, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on May 21, 2018. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Lea Peters. Employer's Exhibit 1 was 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 February 19, 2018. Employer discharged claimant on March 2, 2018, because claimant had topped his semi while driving under a bridge that was too short for his vehicle to make it under. Claimant acknowledged that he saw the sign indicating that that bridge had a height limit of 11' 9". Claimant stated that he knew that the height of his trailer was 13' 2". Claimant stated that he had spoken with another driver who told claimant that he would be fine to travel under the bridge.

Claimant received training from the company upon hire which included a statement that claimant may be terminated for an accident. Claimant's accident was deemed to be preventable. Claimant received a ticket for failure to head traffic warning. Claimant's accident caused well over \$4,000.00 in damage.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a provides:

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

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.

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).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

In order to establish misconduct as to disqualify a former employee from benefits an employer must establish the employee was responsible for a deliberate act or omission which was a material breach of the duties and obligations owed by the employee to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d 445 (Iowa 1979); *Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). The conduct must show a 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 the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon supra*; *Henry supra*.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning termination for accidents.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant acknowledged seeing the street sign, but decided to follow the advice of some other unnamed truck driver. His decision resulted in thousands of dollars in damages to employer and could have easily been avoided by going the same route claimant had entered into his most recent delivery. 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 April 25, 2018, 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.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn