

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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

TODD M MURRAY
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 19A-UI-05751-JE-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

BUNN-O-MATIC CORPORATION
Employer

OC: 06/23/19
Claimant: Respondent (2)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct
Section 96.3-7 – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the July 11, 2019, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on August 12, 2019. The claimant did not participate in the hearing. Jenny Robinson, Human Resources Manager and Boyd Hawn, Commercial Supervisor, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer. Employer's Exhibits One through Four were 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 Bunn-O-Matic Corporation from December 17, 2018 to June 20, 2019. He was discharged for violating the employer's safety policy.

On February 12, 2019, the claimant received a written warning for violating the employer's hostile work environment policy after he threw an air tool narrowly missing his supervisor's face and then began complaining loudly about another employee he assumed complained about him (Employer's Three).

The employer's attendance policy considers three incidents in a rolling three month period to be excessive and disciplinary action begins (Employer's Exhibit Three). The claimant was absent six hours January 22, 2019, for personal reasons; eight hours February 4, 2019, for personal reasons; two hours February 7, 2019, for personal reasons; eight hours February 8, 2019, for personal reasons; eight hours February 25, 2019, for personal reasons; six hours March 4, 2019, for personal reasons; and eight hours March 5, 2019, for personal reasons and received a verbal warning regarding his attendance March 6, 2019 (Employer's Exhibit Three). He was absent eight hours March 13, 2019, for personal reasons and eight hours March 14, 2019, due

to illness and received a written warning for attendance March 19, 2019 (Employer's Exhibit Three). The claimant was tardy February 11, February 18, March 12, March 19, March 20, March 22 and March 25, 2019, and received a verbal warning for attendance March 26, 2019 (Employer's Exhibit Three).

The claimant received a verbal warning for quality and quantity of work April 5, 2019, after he failed to "follow his criticals" to torque the terminal block screws to 20 in/lbs. We had to unbox five machines due to this issue" (Employer's Exhibit Three).

The claimant drove carelessly in the parking lot on several occasions and received a verbal warning April 17, 2019 (Employer's Exhibit Three).

On April 17, 2019, the claimant was sitting on a pallet of parts using his cell phone in violation of the employer's policy and received a verbal warning (Employer's Exhibit Three).

The claimant was absent for personal reasons May 9 and May 10, 2019, and received a written warning and suspension (Employer's Exhibit Three).

On June 18, 2019, the claimant used his cell phone in the restroom on two occasions outside of his break time and the employer issued him a written warning (Employer's Exhibit Three). Also on June 18, 2019, the employer talked to the claimant about his use of vulgar language.

On June 20, 2019, the claimant violated the employer's safety policy by standing on an empty wooden pallet four to five inches off the ground on a pallet jack. There is never a work reason to stand on a pallet which wooden slats are easily broken and can cause injury. The claimant was also seen riding the pallet jack like a scooter in the back of the jack and admitted doing so to the employer. The claimant's supervisor support and other employees witnessed the claimant's actions and he was sent home pending investigation of the incident and review of his file. After an examination of the pertinent information, the employer called the claimant and notified him his employment was terminated.

The claimant has claimed and received unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$277.00 for the one week ending July 13, 2019.

The employer personally participated in the fact-finding interview through the statements of Human Resources Manager Jenny Robinson; Human Resources Representative Stephanie Blazek; and Commercial Supervisor Boyd Hawn. The employer also submitted written documentation prior to the fact-finding interview.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for disqualifying job misconduct.

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).

The employer has the burden of proving disqualifying misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged him for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a. Misconduct that disqualifies an individual from receiving unemployment insurance benefits occurs when there are deliberate acts or omissions that constitute a material breach of the worker's duties and obligations to the employer. See 871 IAC 24.32(1).

The claimant was warned about his performance and behavior on nine occasions between February 12 and June 18, 2019. That does not include the final incident where he was standing on a pallet on a pallet jack four to five inches off the ground and also riding the pallet jack like a scooter June 20, 2019. The claimant knew or should have known that his actions were inappropriate and unprofessional and would result in the eventual termination of his employment.

Under these circumstances, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant's conduct demonstrated a willful disregard of the standards of behavior the employer has the right to expect of employees and shows an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests and the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. The employer has met its burden of proving disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. IDJS*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). Therefore, benefits are denied.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if unrebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871—subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

(2) "A continuous pattern of nonparticipation in the initial determination to award benefits," pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, as the term is used for an entity representing employers, means on 25 or more occasions in a calendar quarter beginning with the first calendar quarter of 2009, the entity files appeals after failing to participate. Appeals filed but withdrawn before the day of the contested case hearing will not be considered in determining if a continuous pattern of nonparticipation exists. The division administrator shall notify the employer's representative in writing after each such appeal.

(3) If the division administrator finds that an entity representing employers as defined in Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, has engaged in a continuous pattern of nonparticipation, the division administrator shall suspend said representative for a period of up to six months on the first occasion, up to one year on the second occasion and up to ten years on the third or subsequent occasion. Suspension by the division administrator constitutes final agency action and may be appealed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.19.

(4) "Fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual," as the term is used for claimants in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means providing knowingly false statements or knowingly false denials of material facts for the purpose of obtaining unemployment insurance benefits. Statements or denials may be either oral or written by the claimant. Inadvertent misstatements or mistakes made in good faith are not considered fraud or willful misrepresentation.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.3(7)"b" as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

The unemployment insurance law requires benefits be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later denied benefits even if the claimant acted in good faith and was not at fault. However, a claimant will not have to repay an overpayment when an initial decision to award benefits on an employment separation issue is reversed on appeal if two conditions are met: (1) the claimant did not receive the benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, and (2) the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding that awarded benefits. In addition, if a claimant is not required to repay an overpayment because the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding, the employer's account will be charged for the overpaid benefits. Iowa Code section 96.3(7)a, b.

The claimant received benefits but has been denied benefits as a result of this decision. The claimant, therefore, was overpaid benefits.

Because the employer participated in the fact-finding interview, the claimant is required to repay the overpayment and the employer will not be charged for benefits paid.

The employer participated in the fact-finding interview personally through the statements of Human Resources Manager Jenny Robinson; Human Resources Representative Stephanie Blazek; and Commercial Supervisor Boyd Hawn. Consequently, the claimant's overpayment of benefits cannot be waived and he is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$277.00 for the one week ending July 13, 2019.

DECISION:

The July 11, 2019, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. Benefits are withheld until such time as he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. The employer personally participated in the fact-finding interview within the meaning of the law. Therefore, the claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$277.00 for the one week ending July 13, 2019.

Julie Elder
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

je/scn