

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

LORETTA KOKONEN

Claimant

APPEAL NO. 08A-UI-02715-ET

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WEST LIBERTY FOODS LLC

Employer

**OC: 02-17-08 R: 04
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 March 11, 2008, 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 April 2, 2008. The claimant participated in the hearing. Jamie Reuss, Human Resource Manager, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer. Employer's Exhibit One 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 full-time security guard for West Liberty Foods from September 21, 1998 to February 18, 2008. On January 31, 2008, the claimant was suspended after allowing an ex-employee to enter the plant without an escort. He wanted to talk to three current employees about a personal issue and there was a verbal altercation as a result. When the claimant returned to work February 8, 2008, the employer had a detailed conversation with her about not allowing people to pass through without a badge or an escort as required by the employer's policy and the claimant indicated she understood the policy (Employer's Exhibit One). On February 13, 2008, the claimant allowed a plumber to enter the plant without an escort or authorization. She was suspended pending further investigation and her employment was terminated February 18, 2008, for violation of the employer's visitor and function and responsibilities policy (Employer's Exhibit One).

The claimant has claimed and received unemployment insurance benefits since his separation from this employer.

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:

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 proving disqualifying misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The claimant allowed an ex-employee to enter the plant without an escort January 31, 2008, and then allowed a plumber to do so as well less than two weeks later, five days after returning from suspension for the first incident. The claimant was aware of the employer's rules and had been warned and suspended for the behavior that led to her termination of 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). Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7 provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in

good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the claimant was not entitled. Those benefits must be recovered in accordance with the provisions of Iowa law.

DECISION:

The March 11, 2008, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. Benefits are withheld until such time as she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$1,749.00.

Julie Elder
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

je/css