

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**KRYSTLE L POWERS**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 10A-UI-08569-H2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**BUILDING PRODUCTS INC OF IOWA**  
Employer

**OC: 05-02-10**  
**Claimant: Respondent (2-R)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Leaving  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) - Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the June 8, 2010, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on August 3, 2010. The claimant did participate. The employer did participate through Debbie Hammargren, Assistant Manager; Tim Gannon, Branch Manager; Jim Boileau, Inside Sales Person; and Mark Rice, Inside Sales Manager.

**ISSUES:**

Did the claimant voluntarily quit her employment without good cause attributable to the employer?

Has the claimant been overpaid any unemployment insurance benefits?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as an inside sales person, full-time, beginning July 20, 2009, through April 30, 2010, when she voluntarily quit. The claimant was never told that she had to resign or she would be discharged. The claimant was never asked to quit, she was asked if she was happy in the job, as the employer thought she did not seem to enjoy the work. The claimant believed that the employer wanted her to quit, so she did. The employer was willing to help the claimant be successful at work and was assigning Mr. Rice to help her. The employer did not hire Mr. Boileau or anyone else to replace her until after she had already quit. Mr. Boileau was not even approached about working for the employer until after the claimant had quit. The claimant has received unemployment benefits since filing a claim with an effective date of May 2, 2010.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant voluntarily left the employment without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

871 IAC 24.25(21) provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code § 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

(21) The claimant left because of dissatisfaction with the work environment.

871 IAC 24.25(33) provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code § 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

(33) The claimant left because such claimant felt that the job performance was not to the satisfaction of the employer; provided, the employer had not requested the claimant to leave and continued work was available.

The claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Iowa Code § 96.6(2). A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act of carrying out that intention. *Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer*, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980). The administrative law judge does not believe that the claimant was ever asked to resign or told she would be discharged. The employer was trying to help the claimant be successful. An employer asking an employee if they are happy in the job or telling an employee that they do not seem happy does not create a hostile or intolerable work environment. An employer is allowed to instruct an employee to follow the chain of command when providing information. The claimant did not like the work environment and mistakenly believed the employer wanted her to quit. Her quitting under those circumstances is not good cause attributable to the employer for leaving the employment. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code § 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. 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.

b. (1) 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. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Because claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which claimant was not entitled. The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment may not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. If so, the employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3(7). In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits.

**DECISION:**

The June 8, 2010 (reference 01) decision is reversed. Claimant voluntarily left the employment without good cause attributable to the employer. 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.

**REMAND:**

The matter of determining the amount of the potential overpayment and whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

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Teresa K. Hillary  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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