

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**MORGAN S STREAT**

Claimant

**APPEAL 22A-UI-07434-AW-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**WEST LIBERTY FOODS LLC**

Employer

**OC: 03/29/20**

**Claimant: Appellant (1)**

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Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Eligibility – A&A – Able to, available for, work search

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Filing – Timely Appeal

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35 – Filing

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Claimant filed an appeal from the March 9, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits effective March 29, 2020 finding claimant was not able to and available for work due to a leave of absence. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on May 11, 2022. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Mira Zamudio, Human Resources Manager. No exhibits were admitted. Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

**ISSUES:**

Whether claimant filed a timely appeal.

Whether claimant was able to and available for work.

Whether claimant was on an approved leave of absence.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

The Unemployment Insurance Decision was mailed to claimant at the correct address on March 9, 2021. Claimant did not receive the decision. The decision states that it becomes final unless an appeal is postmarked or received by Iowa Workforce Development Appeals Section by March 19, 2021. Claimant learned of the disqualifying decision when he received overpayment decisions mailed on March 24, 2022. Claimant appealed the decisions online on March 28, 2022. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) received the appeal on March 28, 2022.

Claimant was employed as a full-time Security Guard from October 5, 2015 until his employment with West Liberty Foods ended on March 11, 2021. Claimant was on an approved leave of absence from March 23, 2020 until July 9, 2020. Claimant returned to work from July 9, 2020 until December 28, 2020 but worked less than his regular full-time hours because of his health. Claimant was on a leave of absence from December 28, 2020 until March 11, 2021.

Claimant filed an initial claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective March 29, 2020 and ongoing weekly claims from March 29, 2020 through November 7, 2020.

### **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes:

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part: “[u]nless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision.”

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(1) provides:

1. Except as otherwise provided by statute or by division rule, any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document submitted to the division shall be considered received by and filed with the division:

(a) If transmitted via the United States Postal Service on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark, or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it is received; or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion.

(b) If transmitted via the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES), maintained by the United States Department of Labor, on the date it was submitted to SIDES.

(c) If transmitted by any means other than [United States Postal Service or the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES)], on the date it is received by the division.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) provides:

2. The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott* 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion? *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

Claimant did not receive the decision. Therefore, the appeal notice provisions were invalid. Claimant did not have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. Claimant filed his appeal

promptly upon learning of the decision denying benefits. Claimant's appeal is considered timely.

The next issues to be determined are whether claimant was able to and available for work and whether he was on an approved leave of absence. For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes:

Iowa Code section 96.4(3) provides:

An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

3. The individual is able to work, is available for work, and is earnestly and actively seeking work. This subsection is waived if the individual is deemed partially unemployed, while employed at the individual's regular job, as defined in section 96.1A, subsection 37, paragraph "b", subparagraph (1), or temporarily unemployed as defined in section 96.1A, subsection 37, paragraph "c". The work search requirements of this subsection and the disqualification requirement for failure to apply for, or to accept suitable work of section 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(2) provides:

Benefit eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

(2) Available for work. The availability requirement is satisfied when an individual is willing, able, and ready to accept suitable work which the individual does not have good cause to refuse, that is, the individual is genuinely attached to the labor market. Since, under unemployment insurance laws, it is the availability of an individual that is required to be tested, the labor market must be described in terms of the individual. A labor market for an individual means a market for the type of service which the individual offers in the geographical area in which the individual offers the service. Market in that sense does not mean that job vacancies must exist; the purpose of unemployment insurance is to compensate for lack of job vacancies. It means only that the type of services which an individual is offering is generally performed in the geographical area in which the individual is offering the services.

j. Leave of absence. A leave of absence negotiated with the consent of both parties, employer and employee, is deemed a period of voluntary unemployment for the employee-individual, and the individual is considered ineligible for benefits for the period.

(1) If at the end of a period or term of negotiated leave of absence the employer fails to reemploy the employee-individual, the individual is considered laid off and eligible for benefits.

(2) If the employee-individual fails to return at the end of the leave of absence and subsequently becomes unemployed the individual is considered as having voluntarily quit and therefore is ineligible for benefits.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10), (23) provide:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(10) The claimant requested and was granted a leave of absence, such period is deemed to be a period of voluntary unemployment and shall be considered ineligible for benefits for such period.

(35) Where the claimant is not able to work and is under the care of a medical practitioner and has not been released as being able to work.

An individual claiming benefits has the burden of proof that he or she is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22.

From March 23, 2020 until July 9, 2020, claimant was on an approved leave of absence and, thus, was not able to and available for work. Benefits are denied.

From July 10, 2020 until December 28, 2020, claimant was under the care of a medical practitioner who restricted claimant's working hours to part-time. Claimant was not able to and available for work for his regular full-time hours. Benefits are denied.

Effective December 29, 2020, claimant was on an approved leave of absence and, thus, was not able to and available for work. Benefits are denied.

**DECISION:**

The appeal is timely. The March 9, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. Claimant was not able to and available for work effective March 29, 2020. Benefits are denied.



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Adrienne C. Williamson  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
Iowa Workforce Development  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
Fax (515)478-3528

May 13, 2022  
Decision Dated and Mailed

acw/acw

**NOTE TO CLAIMANT:** This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits. If you disagree with this decision, you may file an appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision.

Individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits and were unemployed between February 2, 2020, and June 12, 2021 for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** To apply for PUA go to <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/unemployment-insurance-appeals> and click the link in the last paragraph under "WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE HEARING." **The authorization number is 107434, the pin number you used for the hearing.**

If this decision becomes final and you are not eligible for PUA, you may have an overpayment of benefits.