

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

ERIC D HART
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-15017-AT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

G P ENTERPRISES LLC
Employer

OC: 10/16/11
Claimant: Respondent (2-R)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

G. P. Enterprises filed a timely appeal from an unemployment insurance decision dated November 15, 2011, reference 01, that allowed benefits to Eric D. Hart. After due notice was issued, a telephone hearing was held December 15, 2011 with Mr. Hart participating. Owner, Matt Cook, and Laborer, Jesse Guilford participated for the employer. The administrative law judge takes official notice of agency benefit payment records.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for misconduct in connection with the employment?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Eric D. Hart worked as a laborer for G. P. Enterprises for approximately two years until being notified by Owner Matt Cook on September 13, 2011 that he had been replaced. Mr. Hart had agreed to work at a job site in Belmond, Iowa on September 9, 2011. He did not report to the job site, making it necessary that Owner Matt Cook handle the matter personally. Mr. Hart also did not report to work on Monday, September 12, 2011. Mr. Hart had been absent without contact on several occasions between May 3 and July 1, 2011. Mr. Hart has received unemployment insurance benefits since filing a claim effective October 16, 2011.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The question is whether the evidence establishes that the claimant was discharged for misconduct in connection with the employment.

Iowa Code § 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.

Excessive, unexcused absenteeism is one form of misconduct. See Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984) and 871 IAC 24.32(7). Mr. Cook's testimony was corroborated in part by the testimony of Mr. Guilford. It establishes a pattern of absences without contact by Mr. Hart. This evidence is sufficient to establish excessive, unexcused absenteeism. Benefits are withheld.

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.

The question of whether the claimant must repay the benefits he has received is remanded to the Unemployment Insurance Services Division.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated November 15, 2011, reference 01, is reversed. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The question of repayment of benefits is remanded.

Dan Anderson
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

pjs/pjs