

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**TEONA M HARMON**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-03352-LT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**HY-VEE INC**  
Employer

**OC: 02/17/13**  
**Claimant: Respondent (2-R)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed an appeal from the March 15, 2013 (reference 01) decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call on April 18, 2013. Claimant participated. Employer participated through store operations manager, Brett Irving and kitchen manager, Chad Bierman and was represented by F. K. Landolphi of Corporate Cost Control. Employer's Exhibit 1 (fax pages 3 – 8) was received.

**ISSUES:**

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

Is the claimant overpaid benefits?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full time as a clerk from September 2010 and was separated from employment on February 13, 2013. Employees had reported to Bierman that claimant had been taking items without paying for them in the morning before management arrived so he had been observing her. On February 12, Bierman told her she could leave for the day. She got her purse and left the kitchen area. On the way to the time clock she stopped to talk to someone so Bierman asked her to clock out and leave. After she clocked out Bierman saw her with two boxes of unknown product in her possession and shortly later saw a box in her partially open bag. He followed her and did not see her put the box or boxes back but did observe her purchase an energy drink. He continued to follow her as she looked for her landlord, also a Hy-Vee employee, in the back of the store and went to the restroom. Bierman waited outside the restroom and his wife/Hy-Vee employee went in to wash her hands. Claimant left the restroom, where she saw Bierman who asked her if she found her landlord. She said no and walked towards the exit at the front of the store. Bierman followed her to the front of the store, confronted her outside in the parking lot and asked if she paid for items. She said she put the granola bars back (before she checked out with the energy drink and went to the restroom) and showed him her bag. He saw library DVDs in her purse but no granola bars. She left and

Bierman went into the bathroom with his wife where they found the empty granola bar box in the bottom of the garbage can. He conducted an inventory check that showed one box of granola bars was missing. At the termination meeting the following day she denied taking the granola bars.

Claimant received unemployment benefits after the separation on a claim with an effective date of March 15, 2013.

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

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct.

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.

While Bierman may not have seen the granola bars in claimant's purse after she left the store, the evidence is persuasive that she did something with them; concealing them on her person, destroying them or concealing them elsewhere in the store. The employer has presented substantial and credible evidence that claimant misappropriated store property. This is disqualifying misconduct. 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 will 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. The employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3(7). In this case, claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits.

**DECISION:**

The March 15, 2013 (reference 01) decision is reversed. 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.

**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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Dévon M. Lewis  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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