

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**LUIS A ARREOLA**  
Claimant

**APPEAL 17A-UI-07166-DB-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**SMITHFIELD FARMLAND CORP**  
Employer

**OC: 06/18/17  
Claimant: Appellant (2)**

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Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant/appellant filed an appeal from the July 13, 2017 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon him voluntarily quitting work without good cause attributable to the employer. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on August 2, 2017. The claimant, Luis A. Arreola, participated personally and was represented by Attorney Jennifer M. Zupp. CTS Language Link provided interpreter services to the claimant. The employer, Smithfield Farmland Corp., did not participate.

**ISSUES:**

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?  
Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment with good cause attributable to employer?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full-time as a production worker. He began working for this employer on December 20, 2016 and his employment ended on Monday, June 19, 2017, when he was discharged. Claimant's working hours were Monday through Friday each week from 6:30 a.m. until production ended for the day. Claimant also worked occasional Saturdays.

On Saturday, June 17, 2017 claimant reported to work for his scheduled shift and worked until production ended. When production ends, the employees are allowed to leave. Claimant, along with several other co-workers, left after production had ended for the day.

On Monday, June 19, 2017, when claimant reported to work he was told by a human resource representative that he was not allowed to work because the employer considered him to have voluntarily quit his job when he left work on Saturday, June 17, 2017. The employer believed that claimant had abandoned his job. Claimant did not abandon his job. Claimant did not intend to quit his job. Claimant had no previous disciplinary warnings issued to him during the course of his employment.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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

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.

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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

First, it must be determined whether claimant quit or was discharged from employment. A voluntary quitting means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer and requires an intention to terminate the employment. *Wills v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 447 N.W. 2d 137, 138 (Iowa 1989). 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). Where a claimant walked off the job without permission before the end of his shift saying he wanted a meeting with management the next day, the Iowa Court of Appeals ruled this was not a voluntary quit because the claimant's expressed desire to meet with management was evidence that he wished to maintain the employment relationship. *Peck v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 492 N.W.2d 438 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992). Such cases must be analyzed as a discharge from employment.

Claimant clearly had no intention to quit. Further, there was not an overt act of carrying out any intention to quit by claimant. Claimant left work on Saturday, June 17, 2017 when production ended, as he had normally done in the past. As such, the employer has failed to establish that claimant voluntarily quit his employment and this case shall be analyzed as a discharge.

Because claimant was discharged from employment, the burden of proof falls to the employer to establish that claimant was discharged for job-related misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." An employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct as the reason for the separation, the employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation.

Claimant was discharged because the employer believed claimant left his shift early on Saturday, June 17, 2017 and abandoned his job. The credible evidence establishes that claimant did not leave his shift early on Saturday, June 17, 2017. The employer failed to meet its' burden of proof to establish disqualifying job-related misconduct. As such, benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The July 13, 2017 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided he is otherwise eligible.

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Dawn Boucher  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

db/rvs