

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

GRANT S SWEET

Claimant

DEN HARTOG INDUSTRIES INC

Employer

APPEAL 20R-UI-05175-AW-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 02/09/20

Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment
PL116-136, Sec. 2104 – Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from the March 19, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was scheduled for April 28, 2020. No hearing was held because appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which appellant could be reached for the scheduled hearing. On May 1, 2020, a default decision was issued dismissing the appeal (number 20A-UI-02643-AW-T).

On May 11, 2020, claimant appealed to the Employment Appeal Board (EAB). On June 1, 2020, the EAB remanded this matter to the Appeals Bureau for a hearing on the merits. Upon remand, due notice was issued and a hearing was held on July 2, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. Claimant participated. Employer did not participate. No exhibits were admitted. Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

Whether claimant's separation was a discharge for disqualifying job-related misconduct.

Whether claimant was overpaid benefits.

Whether claimant is eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a full-time production welder from July 29, 2019 until his employment with Den Hartog Industries ended on December 12, 2019, when employer discharged claimant for not performing his work fast enough. Claimant had prior warnings regarding his efficiency. Claimant performed his job duties to the best of his ability. Claimant prioritized the quality of his work over the quantity and never intentionally performed his work inefficiently.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Iowa Code section 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 disqualification shall continue 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:

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 of misconduct has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Reigelsberger v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 500 N.W.2d 64, 66 (Iowa 1993); *accord Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000). Further, the employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) *Past acts of misconduct*. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

A determination as to whether an employee's act is misconduct does not rest solely on the interpretation or application of the employer's policy or rule. A violation is not necessarily disqualifying misconduct even if the employer was fully within its rights to impose discipline up to or including discharge for the incident under its policy. 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." *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. *Lee v. Employment Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). A failure in job performance is not misconduct unless it is intentional. *Huntoon*, supra; *Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000).

Claimant did not perform his work more slowly than he was able to and was not intentionally inefficient. Thus, any inadequacies in claimant's job performance do not constitute misconduct. Employer has not met its burden of proving disqualifying job-related misconduct. Claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible

Because claimant's separation was not disqualifying, the issue of overpayment is moot. Because claimant is eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits, he is also eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation. See PL 116-136 §2104(B).

DECISION:

The March 19, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible. The issue of overpayment is moot. Claimant is eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.



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

July 13, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

acw/scn