

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

BRIAN D SMITH
721 MAIN ST APT 2
IOWA FALLS IA 50126-2266

COUNTYLINE ENGINEERING INC
824 BROOKS RD
IOWA FALLS IA 50126

Appeal Number: 06A-UI-06991-DT
OC: 07/17/05 R: 02
Claimant: Appellant (1)

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319**.

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

STATE CLEARLY

1. The name, address and social security number of the claimant.
2. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
3. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
4. The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Brian D. Smith (claimant) appealed a representative's June 30, 2006 decision (reference 02) that concluded he was not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment from Countyline Engineering, Inc. (employer). After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on August 1, 2006. The claimant participated in the hearing. Jean Thompson appeared on the employer's behalf. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for work-connected misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant started working for the employer on January 17, 2006. He worked full time as a welder in the employer's livestock equipment manufacturing business. His last day of work was June 14, 2006. The employer discharged him on that date. The reason asserted for the discharge was attendance.

The claimant's work schedule was 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. He had been given a write-up on March 29, 2006 for being a no-call, no-show on March 28, 2006. The write-up indicated that the next unexcused attendance issue would result in a suspension. On April 7, 2006, the claimant was 2.5 hours tardy; as a result, he was suspended on April 10, April 11, and April 12, 2006. On May 12, 2006, he was an hour late and was given a write-up that further attendance issues could result in discharge. He called in sick on May 24, 2006 and no disciplinary action was taken.

On June 14, 2006, the claimant was 30 to 45 minutes late to work because he was pulled over on the way to work for speeding. When he arrived at work, he was informed he was discharged.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the employer discharged the claimant for reasons establishing work-connected misconduct. The issue is not whether the employer was right or even had any other choice but to terminate the claimant's employment, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. Infante v. IDJS, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what is misconduct that warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. Pierce v. IDJS, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988). A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. Cosper v. IDJS, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

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 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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

871 IAC 24.32(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

Tardies are treated as absences for purposes of unemployment insurance law. Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). Absences or tardies due to issues that are of purely personal responsibility, including being pulled over for speeding, are not excusable. Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984); Harlan v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 192 (Iowa 1984). The claimant's final tardy was not excused and was not due to illness or other reasonable grounds. The claimant had previously been warned that future occurrences could result in termination. Higgins v. IDJS, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). The employer discharged the claimant for reasons amounting to work-connected misconduct.

DECISION:

The representative's June 30, 2006 decision (reference 02) is affirmed. The employer discharged the claimant for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits as of June 14, 2006. This disqualification continues until he has been paid ten times his weekly benefit amount for insured work, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account will not be charged.

ld/kjw