

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

APRIL L LOWELL
Claimant

PARTY CITY CORPORATION
Employer

APPEAL 20A-UI-14877-AD-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 03/15/20
Claimant: Appellant (1R)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2) – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Filing – Timely Appeal
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35 – Filing

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On November 5, 2020, April Lowell (claimant/appellant) filed an appeal from the May 15, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based on a finding claimant was discharged from work on January 31, 2020 for excessive unexcused absenteeism.

A telephone hearing was held on January 19, 2021. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by District Manager Nancy Stava. Manager Donna McKillip participated as a witness. Employer was represented by Thomas Kuiper.

Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

ISSUE(S):

- I. Is the appeal timely?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

The Unemployment Insurance Decision was mailed to claimant at 225 Bluff St Unit 20 in Sioux City, IA on May 15, 2020. That was claimant's correct address at that time. The decision states that it becomes final unless an appeal is postmarked or received by Iowa Workforce Development Appeals Section by May 25, 2020. However, if the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the appeal period is extended to the next working day. Claimant appealed the decision online on November 5, 2020, after receiving decisions indicating she had been overpaid benefits.

Claimant did receive the decision on or about May 15, 2020 and noted the appeal deadline. Claimant did not appeal at that time because she had recently secured new employment.

Claimant subsequently separated from that new employment. The administrative record shows claimant earned insured wages in the amount of \$5,235.00 since separating from employer. Claimant's weekly benefit amount is \$180.00.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant's appeal was untimely. The administrative law judge therefore lacks jurisdiction to change the May 15, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits. That decision remains in force. The issue of whether claimant has requalified for benefits is REMANDED to the Benefits Bureau for a decision with right of appeal.

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part: "[u]nless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision."

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(1)(a) provides:

1. Except as otherwise provided by statute or by division rule, any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document submitted to the division shall be considered received by and filed with the division:
 - (a) If transmitted via the United States Postal Service on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark, or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark on the envelope in which it is received; or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion.
 - (b)
 - (c) If transmitted by any means other than [United States Postal Service or the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES)], on the date it is received by the division.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) provides:

2. The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

There is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and the Administrative Law Judge has no authority to change the decision of representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). The ten-day period for appealing an initial determination concerning a claim for benefits has been described as jurisdictional. *Messina v. Iowa Dept. of Job Service*, 341 N.W.2d 52, 55 (Iowa 1983); *Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979). The only basis for changing the ten-day period would be where notice to the appealing party was constitutionally invalid. *E.g. Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979). The question in such cases becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 212 N.W.2d 471 (Iowa 1973). The question of whether the Claimant has been denied a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal is also informed by rule 871-24.35(2) which states that "the submission of any ...appeal...not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be

considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.”

Claimant did receive the decision on or about May 15, 2020 and noted the appeal deadline. Claimant did not appeal at that time because she had recently secured new employment. The delay in appealing was not due to any agency error or misinformation or delay of the United States Postal Service. The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely and, therefore, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal.

DECISION:

The administrative law judge concludes the claimant’s appeal was untimely. The administrative law judge therefore lacks jurisdiction to change the May 15, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits. That decision remains in force.

REMAND:

The issue of whether claimant has requalified for benefits is REMANDED to the Benefits Bureau for a decision with right of appeal.



Andrew B. Duffelmeyer
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax (515) 478-3528

February 4, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

abd/mh

Note to Claimant:

If you disagree with this decision, you may file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. If this decision denies benefits, you may be responsible for paying back benefits already received.

Individuals who are disqualified from or are otherwise ineligible for **regular** unemployment insurance benefits but who are currently unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.