

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

**TOMAS VILLALOBOS**  
Claimant

**APPEAL 15A-UI-05115-EC-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CARGILL MEAT SOLUTIONS CORP**  
Employer

**OC: 01/18/15**  
**Claimant: Appellant (1,6)**

Iowa Code §96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeals  
Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Default and Dismissal

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant/appellant, Tomas Villalobos, filed an appeal from the February 2, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon his voluntarily quitting his employment when he failed to report for work three days in a row without notifying his employer. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing scheduled for June 4, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the scheduled hearing. The claimant, Tomas Villalobos, did not participate. The employer, Cargill Meat Solutions Corp., followed the instructions on the hearing notice. The employer's representative, Martha Gutierrez, was present and prepared to proceed with the hearing as scheduled. Because the claimant/appellant failed to follow the instructions on the notice of hearing, no hearing was held.

**ISSUES:**

Did the claimant file a timely appeal?

Should the appeal be dismissed based on the appellant's failure to appear and participate?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, which includes the IWD decision, the claimant's appeal, and the notice of hearing, the administrative law judge makes the following findings of fact based on the undisputed relevant evidence.

Iowa Workforce Development issued a decision on February 2, 2015, reference 01, finding that the claimant, Tomas Villalobos, was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. This decision included the appeal deadline of February 12, 2015. The decision includes this statement: "This decision becomes final unless an appeal is postmarked by 02/12/2015, or received by Iowa Workforce Appeal Section by that date."

The claimant submitted an appeal dated April 27, 2015. This appeal was received in the IWD Appeals Section on April 29, 2015. No other information was submitted to show why the claimant failed to file his appeal on or before the deadline of February 12, 2015.

The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing for this appeal. The appellant failed to provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the scheduled hearing as required by the hearing notice. He did not request a postponement of the hearing. No hearing was held. Official notice of the Clear2there hearing control screen is taken to establish that appellant did not call or register online with the Appeals Bureau to provide a telephone number and/or name of a representative.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advises parties:

**Immediately register your phone number online or by calling one of the numbers provided below for a telephone hearing scheduled for:**

Date: THURSDAY JUNE 4, 2015

Iowa Time: 11:00 AM

**The judge will not call you on the day of the hearing if you have not registered your phone number with the Appeals Bureau in Des Moines, Iowa as instructed below.**

The back page of the hearing notice provides further instruction and warning:

If you do not participate in the hearing because you do not register for the hearing, register late, or cannot be reached at the number you provided when the judge calls for the hearing, the appeal may be dismissed or decided based on other available evidence. **The judge will not call you unless you register online or by phone before the hearing and give your phone number to the Appeals Bureau as instructed on the front side of this notice.** This is true even if agency representatives previously contacted you directly or you provided your phone number on some written documentation.

As a *courtesy* to the appellant the record was left open for a minimum grace period of 15 minutes after the hearing start time to give the appellant a *reasonable* opportunity to participate. Allowing additional time would prejudice the non-appealing party for appearing in a timely manner. Holding the appellant in default for failure to appear and participate during a 15-minute window after the hearing start time is reasonable considering the time allocated for each unemployment hearing.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code §96.6(2) requires a claimant to file an appeal of an IWD decision “within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant’s last known address.” The Iowa Supreme Court determined that a timely appeal is both mandatory and jurisdictional. *Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. of Job Services*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979).

In the decision dated February 2, 2015, reference 01, IWD found that the claimant was ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. This decision includes this statement: “This decision becomes final unless an appeal is postmarked by 02/12/2015, or received by Iowa Workforce Appeal Section by that date.”

The claimant’s appeal was dated April 27, 2015. The IWD Appeals Section received his appeal on April 29, 2015. His appeal was untimely. It was not postmarked or received in the IWD Appeals Section by February 12, 2015. The claimant failed to participate in his appeal hearing to provide any appropriate reasons for his untimely appeal. Because the claimant’s appeal was untimely, I do not have jurisdiction to consider whether or not he was correctly determined to be ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

The Iowa Administrative Procedure Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. **If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.**

Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing **by the scheduled starting time of the hearing** or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code § 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex

parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. **The record *shall not* be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.**

**c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing *shall not* constitute good cause for reopening the record.** (Emphasis added.)

The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that a default should not be set aside for ordinary negligence or want of ordinary care. Defaults should not be set aside where the movant ignores plain instruction with ample opportunity to comply. See *Houlihan v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 545 N.W.2d 863 (Iowa 1996). Here the clear directive is to read the hearing notice and register a telephone number where the party can be reached for the hearing. The second part of that directive is to be available at the number provided at the date and time of the hearing. Further, if the party misses or does not receive the hearing call, the party the party may call the telephone numbers on the hearing notice. Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to each party. *The rule does not provide exceptions for good intentions and/or a party contacting the Appeals Bureau within a 'reasonable' or certain amount of time after the hearing is scheduled.*

It is assumed an appellant intends to participate in the hearing simply by the fact that an appeal is filed, but the appellant's responsibility does not end there. Each party is required to follow the prominent specific written instructions printed on the hearing notice. The appellant filed the appeal and is held solely responsible for going forward with the case in a prompt and deliberate manner. The rule holds an appellant in default if not present *at the start* of hearing. As a courtesy, appellant was granted an additional 15-minute grace period not required by statute or rule. Here, notwithstanding notice, opportunity and additional time, the appellant failed to prosecute the case at the appointed date and time without providing a good-cause reason for the delay or failure to do so. Accordingly the appellant is in default and the appeal shall be dismissed. Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 24.14(7). The unemployment insurance decision remains in force and effect.

If the appellant does not intend to pursue this appeal, he need not take any action. If he intends to pursue this appeal, the appellant must make a written request to the administrative law judge that the hearing be reopened within 15 days after the mailing date of this decision. The written request should be mailed to the administrative law judge at the address listed at the end of this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the appellant from participating in the hearing at its scheduled time. The appellant also has the option to appeal the decision directly to the Employment Appeal Board at the address listed in the caption appeal rights information.

#### **DECISION:**

The February 2, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision denying benefits is affirmed, because the appellant's appeal was untimely.

The February 2, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision denying benefits remains in effect as the appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed.

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Emily Gould Chafa  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

ec/pjs