

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

MICHELLE L MEISTER
Claimant

APPEAL 22A-UI-01298-AW-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

POLARIS INDUSTRIES INC
Employer

**OC: 01/10/21
Claimant: Appellant (4)**

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Filing – Timely Appeal
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35 – Filing

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from the December 2, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits effective May 23, 2021 finding claimant was on a voluntary leave of absence and, thus, not able to and available for work. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on February 7, 2022. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Crystal Carlson, Human Resources Generalist. No exhibits were admitted. Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

Whether claimant filed a timely appeal.
Whether claimant was able to and available for work.
Whether claimant was on an approved leave of absence.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

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

The Unemployment Insurance Decision was mailed to claimant at the correct address on December 2, 2021. Claimant received the decision on December 14, 2021. The decision states that it becomes final unless an appeal is postmarked or received by Iowa Workforce Development Appeals Section by December 12, 2021. However, if the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the appeal period is extended to the next working day. December 12, 2021 was a Sunday. Therefore, the deadline was extended to Monday, December 13, 2021. Claimant appealed the decision via fax on December 14, 2021. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) received the appeal on December 14, 2021.

Claimant is employed as a full-time Production Worker for Polaris Industries. Claimant filed an initial claim for unemployment benefits effective January 10, 2021 and various weekly claims thereafter.

For the week ending May 29, 2021, claimant did not work May 24 – 26, 2021 because employer required claimant's absence pursuant to its Covid-19 protocol. Claimant did not request this time off from work and was otherwise able to and available for work. Claimant worked May 27, 2021 but was sent home early due to lack of work. Claimant worked her regular hours May 28, 2021.

For the week ending September 4, 2021, claimant was absent due to illness August 30 – 31, 2021. Claimant worked her regular hours September 1 – 3, 2021.

For the week ending September 11, 2021, claimant received eight hours of holiday pay for September 6, 2021; claimant was laid off without pay September 7 – 10, 2021.

For the week ending October 2, 2021, employer required claimant's absence pursuant to its Covid-19 protocol. Claimant did not request this time off from work and was otherwise able to and available for work.

For the week ending October 23, 2021, claimant was laid off without pay October 18 – 22, 2021.

For the week ending November 27, 2021, claimant was laid off without pay November 22 – 24, 2021; claimant received 8 hours of holiday pay for each day November 25 – 26, 2021.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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

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) 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 of 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) If transmitted via the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES), maintained by the United States Department of Labor, on the date it was submitted to SIDES.

(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.

The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott* 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion? *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

Claimant did not receive the decision prior to the appeal deadline. Therefore, the appeal notice provisions were invalid. Claimant did not have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. Claimant filed her appeal the same day that she received the decision denying benefits. Claimant's appeal is considered timely.

The next issue to be determined is whether claimant was able to and available for work. For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes:

Iowa Code section 96.4(3) provides:

An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

3. The individual is able to work, is available for work, and is earnestly and actively seeking work. This subsection is waived if the individual is deemed partially unemployed, while employed at the individual's regular job, as defined in section 96.1A, subsection 37, paragraph "b", subparagraph (1), or temporarily unemployed as defined in section 96.1A, subsection 37, paragraph "c". The work search requirements of this subsection and the disqualification requirement for failure to apply for, or to accept suitable work of section 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1), (2) provide in pertinent part:

Benefits eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

(1) Able to work. An individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood.

a. Illness, injury or pregnancy. Each case is decided upon an individual basis, recognizing that various work opportunities present different physical requirements. A statement from a medical practitioner is considered prima facie evidence of the physical ability of the individual to perform the work required. A pregnant individual must meet the same criteria for determining ableness as do all other individuals.

(2) Available for work. The availability requirement is satisfied when an individual is willing, able, and ready to accept suitable work which the individual does not have good cause to refuse, that is, the individual is genuinely attached to the labor market. Since, under unemployment insurance laws, it is the availability of an individual that is required to be tested, the labor market must be described in terms of the individual. A labor market for an individual means a market for the type of service which the individual offers in the geographical area in which the individual offers the service. Market in that sense does not mean that job vacancies must exist; the purpose of unemployment insurance is to compensate for lack of job vacancies. It means only that the type of services which an individual is offering is generally performed in the geographical area in which the individual is offering the services.

j. Leave of absence. A leave of absence negotiated with the consent of both parties, employer and employee, is deemed a period of voluntary unemployment for the employee-individual, and the individual is considered ineligible for benefits for the period.

(1) If at the end of a period or term of negotiated leave of absence the employer fails to reemploy the employee-individual, the individual is considered laid off and eligible for benefits.

(2) If the employee-individual fails to return at the end of the leave of absence and subsequently becomes unemployed the individual is considered as having voluntarily quit and therefore is ineligible for benefits.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(1), (10) provide:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(1) An individual who is ill and presently not able to perform work due to illness.

(10) The claimant requested and was granted a leave of absence, such period is deemed to be a period of voluntary unemployment and shall be considered ineligible for benefits for such period.

An individual claiming benefits has the burden of proof that she is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22.

Claimant was not able to and available for work for the benefit week ending September 4, 2021 because she was absent two days due to illness. Benefits are denied for the week ending September 4, 2021.

Claimant was able to and available for work for the benefit weeks ending May 29, 2021, September 11, 2021, October 2, 2021, October 23, 2021, and November 27, 2021. Claimant did not request time off from work and had no barriers to employment those weeks. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible and subject to claimant reporting gross earnings.

DECISION:

The appeal is timely. The December 2, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is modified in favor of appellant.

Claimant was not able to and available for work the benefit week ending September 4, 2021; benefits are denied.

Claimant was able to and available for work the benefit weeks ending May 29, 2021, September 11, 2021, October 2, 2021, October 23, 2021, and November 27, 2021; benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible and subject to claimant reporting gross earnings.



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

March 2, 2022
Decision Dated and Mailed

acw/ACW