

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

MARRY LANGE
Claimant

J & L INVESTMENTS INC
Employer

APPEAL 21R-UI-07594-ED-T
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 04/05/20
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant/appellant filed an appeal from the November 23, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon claimant's discharge from employment. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on May 24, 2021. The claimant, Marry Lange, participated personally. The claimant was represented by attorney, Teri Schmitz. The employer did not participate. The administrative law judge took administrative notice of the claimant's unemployment insurance benefits records including the fact-finding documents. The employer's Exhibit A was admitted.

ISSUES:

Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment with good cause attributable to employer?
Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: J & L Investments Inc. is a McDonald's Restaurant. Claimant was employed part-time cleaning the restaurant on the weekends. Claimant began May 5, 2020 and worked until September 11, 2020 when she was discharged.

Claimant was discharged from employment by her supervisor on September 11, 2020, however, claimant was not given a reason for the discharge. Claimant admits to have dropped a mop bucket while at work. Claimant also was aware that some of her co-workers would use profanity toward her but she denies responding in the same manner. Claimant enjoyed her job overall. Claimant had received a work review in March of 2020 indicating she met all the expectations associated with her job. See Exhibit A. Claimant did not know her job was in jeopardy.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed.

As a preliminary matter, the administrative law judge finds that the Claimant did not quit. Claimant was discharged from employment.

Iowa Code § 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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 Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

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.

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). 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). When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Id.* Negligence does not constitute misconduct unless recurrent in nature; a single act is not disqualifying unless indicative of a deliberate disregard of the employer's interests. *Henry v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 391 N.W.2d 731 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986).

In this case, the employer did not participate in the hearing and did not provide any evidence regarding alleged misconduct.

A claimant cannot be discharged for a past act of misconduct.

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

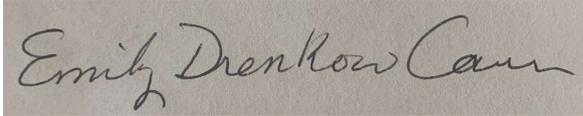
(8) *Past acts of misconduct.* While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The purpose of this rule is to assure that an employer does not save up acts of misconduct and spring them on an employee when an independent desire to terminate arises. For example, an employer may not convert a lay off into a termination for misconduct by relying on past acts. *Milligan v. EAB*, 802 N.W.2d 238 (Table)(Iowa App. June 15, 2011).

The employer has failed to meet its burden of proof in establishing a current act of disqualifying job-related misconduct. As such, benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The November 23, 2020 (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature reads "Emily Drenkow Carr" in a cursive script.

Emily Drenkow Carr
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax (515)478-3528

June 3, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

Ed/kmj