

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

**KARI E LEEPER**  
Claimant

**CHOCOLATERIE STAM USA INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 19A-UI-01216-AW-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 01/06/19**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2) – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32 – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Kari Leeper, Claimant, filed an appeal from the February 8, 2019 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits because she was discharged from work with Chocolaterie Stam USA, Inc. due to violation of a known company rule. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on February 26, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. Claimant participated. Employer did not participate. Claimant's Exhibits A – C were admitted.

**ISSUE:**

Whether claimant's separation was a discharge due to disqualifying job-related misconduct.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

As claimant was the only witness, the administrative law judge makes the following findings of fact based solely upon claimant's testimony: Claimant was employed full-time as a manager from November 2014 until her employment with Chocolaterie Stam USA, Inc. ended on January 11, 2019. Claimant's direct supervisor was Ton Stam, Owner.

On January 11, 2019, employer discharged claimant for failing to inform employer of a shipping issue. Employer did not provide the date of the incident that violated the rule. There was a shipping issue around Christmas 2018, of which claimant informed employer. Claimant is not aware of any other rule or policy that she violated. Claimant was not given any prior warnings for violating employer's rules or policies.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

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

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 disqualification shall continue 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:

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 of misconduct has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Reigelsberger v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 500 N.W.2d 64, 66 (Iowa 1993); *accord Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000). 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).

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.

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. (emphasis added)

A determination as to whether an employee's act is misconduct does not rest solely on the interpretation or application of the employer's policy or rule. A violation is not necessarily disqualifying misconduct even if the employer was fully within its rights to impose discipline up to or including discharge for the incident under its policy. 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). The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. *Lee v. Employment Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). A failure in job performance is not misconduct unless it is intentional. *Huntoon*, supra; *Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000).

There is no evidence of a current act or of misconduct in the record. Employer has not met its burden of proving disqualifying, job-related misconduct. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

**DECISION:**

The February 8, 2019 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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