

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section  
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

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Appeal Number: 05A-UI-07933-H2T  
OC: 06-19-05 R: 03  
Claimant: Respondent (1)

**This Decision Shall Become Final**, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319**.

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

STATE CLEARLY

1. The name, address and social security number of the claimant.
2. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
3. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
4. The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

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(Administrative Law Judge)

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(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the July 25, 2005, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on August 22, 2005. The claimant did participate through the interpretation of Zijo Sucasca and was represented by Anan Mahmutagic, Attorney at Law. Hazim Saric was a witness for the claimant. Employer's Exhibit One was received. Additional hearing time was scheduled for September 12, 2005. The employer did participate through Dave Duncan, Personnel Manager.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as an hourly production worker, full-time beginning August 26, 1997

through June 23, 2005 when he was discharged. The claimant was discharged for fighting with another coworker. The claimant and his witness both state that the other employee involved in the altercation began the fight and threw the first punch. The claimant had no history of discipline for fighting on the job. None of the other employees who allegedly witnessed the altercation, and indicated to the employer in their written statements that the claimant threw the first punch, testified at the hearing.

#### 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.

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 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.

871 IAC 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 Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer discharged the claimant and has the burden of proof to show misconduct. Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance

benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. Miller v. Employment Appeal Board, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa App. 1988).

If a party has the power to produce more explicit and direct evidence than it chooses to do it may be fairly inferred that other evidence would lay open deficiencies in that party's case. Crosser v Iowa Department of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

The employer did not offer the testimony of any of the other co-employees who witnessed the fight. Those co-employee affidavits or signed statements are not subject to cross-examination. The administrative law judge concludes the employer has not meet it's burden of proof. The employer's evidence does not establish that the claimant deliberately and intentionally acted in a manner he knew to be contrary to the employer's interests or standards. There was no wanton or willful disregard of the employer's standards. In short, substantial misconduct has not been established by the evidence. While the employer may have had good cause to discharge, conduct which might warrant a discharge from employment will not necessarily sustain a disqualification from job insurance benefits. Budding v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 337 N.W.2d 219 (Iowa App. 1983).

#### DECISION:

The July 25, 2005, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

tkh/kjf