

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

CHRISTINA M DAVIS Claimant IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT	<div>68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI</div> <div>APPEAL NO: 09A-UI-15816-DT ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE DECISION</div> <div>OC: 05/31/09 Claimant: Appellant (1)</div>
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Section 96.5-1 – Voluntary Leaving
Section 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

An appeal was treated as being made on a representative's unemployment insurance decision dated June 30, 2009 (reference 01) that concluded Christina M. Davis (claimant/appellant) was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment from Wesley Retirement Services, Inc. (employer/respondent). Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 9:00 a.m. on November 23, 2009. This appeal was consolidated for hearing with one related appeal, 09A-UI-15815-DT. The claimant received the hearing notice and responded by calling the Appeals Section on October 30, 2009. She indicated that she would be available at the scheduled time for the hearing at a specified telephone number. However, when the administrative law judge called that number at the scheduled time for the hearing, the claimant was not available; therefore, she did not participate in the hearing. The employer responded to the hearing notice and indicated that Debbie Hornbuckle would participate as the employer's representative. When the administrative law judge contacted the employer for the hearing, Ms. Hornbuckle agreed that the administrative law judge should make a determination based upon a review of the information in the available information. Based on a review of the information in the available information and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant's appeal timely or are there legal grounds under which it can be treated as timely? Was the claimant overpaid unemployment insurance benefits of \$91.00?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The representative's decision was mailed to the claimant's last-known address of record on September 15, 2009. No evidence was provided to rebut the presumption that the claimant received the decision within a few days thereafter. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by September 25, 2009. The appeal was not filed until October 16, 2009, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision.

The claimant established an unemployment insurance benefit year effective May 31, 2009. Her weekly benefit amount was calculated to be \$66.00. She was issued an unemployment insurance benefit payment for one week, the week ending June 6, 2009, before the disqualification decision went into effect. The benefits the claimant received for the week ending June 6 included both the regular \$66.00 weekly benefit amount as well as the \$25.00 economic stimulus unemployment benefit, for a total gross unemployment benefit of \$91.00.

The claimant has made repayment of the \$66.00 regular unemployment benefit. The only amount remaining outstanding at this time is the \$25.00 additional economic stimulus unemployment benefit.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

If a party fails to make a timely appeal of a representative's decision and there is no legal excuse under which the appeal can be deemed to have been made timely, the decision as to the merits has become final and is not subject to further review. Iowa Code § 96.6-2 provides that unless the affected party (here, the claimant) files an appeal from the decision within ten calendar days, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied as set out by the decision.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev., 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); Johnson v. Board of Adjustment, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976). Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. Messina v. IDJS, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa 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 then 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).

A party does not have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal if the delay is due to Agency error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service. 871 IAC 24.35(2). Failing to read and follow the instructions for filing an appeal is not a reason outside the appellant's control that deprived the appellant from having a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. The appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the prescribed time was not due to a legally excusable reason so that it can be treated as timely. The administrative law judge further concludes that because the appeal was not timely, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of

the appeal, regardless of whether the merits of the appeal would be valid. See, Beardslee, supra; Franklin, supra; and Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company v. Employment Appeal Board, 465 N.W.2d 674 (Iowa App. 1990).

However, in the alternative, even if the appeal were to be deemed timely, the administrative law judge would affirm the representative's decision on the merits. The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. Iowa Code § 96.3-7. In this case, because the decision causing the disqualification has now been affirmed, the claimant has received benefits but was ineligible for those benefits.

Even though those benefits were received in good faith, the overpaid benefits must be recovered in accordance with the provisions of Iowa law. This includes all unemployment insurance benefits, both the regular weekly benefit amount and the additional \$25.00 economic stimulus unemployment benefit. The administrative law judge concludes that the claimant was overpaid benefits of \$91.00 for the week ending June 6, 2009 pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.3-7. Of that amount, \$25.00 remains outstanding.

DECISION:

The representative's June 30, 2009 decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative has become final and remains in full force and effect. The claimant was overpaid \$91.00 in total unemployment insurance benefits for the week ending June 6, 2009, of which \$25.00 remains outstanding as of the date of the hearing.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/pjs