

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

JENNIFER BAUGHMAN
1410 E 22ND APT 204
ATLANTIC IA 50022

WAL-MART STORES INC
C/o THE FRICK COMPANY-UC EXPRESS
PO BOX 283
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 05A-UI-08304-BT
OC: 07/10/05 R: 01
Claimant: Respondent (1/R)

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.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96 5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. (employer) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated August 2, 2005, reference 01, which held that Jennifer Baughman (claimant) was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on August 30, 2005. The claimant participated in the hearing with her mother, Karen Reason. The employer participated through Adam Armstrong, Store Manager.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and having considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired as a part-time associate on March 1, 2005, but was working as a full-time baker on July 14, 2005 when she was terminated. The employer discharged the claimant because she was not medically able to return to work. The claimant sustained a work-related injury and was placed on medical leave on June 8, 2005. Her leave expired on July 8, 2005, and she returned to work as scheduled. The claimant went to the doctor on July 9, 2005, and the doctor took her off work due to her being contagious. The claimant provided the employer with the medical excuse and was effectively terminated based on a claim that she failed to return to work from a leave of absence.

The claimant's ability to work has not been adjudicated at the initial, fact-finding level.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a.

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 to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer contends the claimant was discharged for failure to return to work after a leave of absence, but that reason is not factually correct, as the claimant did return from her leave of absence. Her treating physician subsequently took her off work and the employer effectively discharged the claimant because she was not medically able to work. Work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has not been established in this case and benefits are allowed.

The issue of whether the claimant is able and available to work was not included in the Notice of hearing for this case, and the case will be remanded for an investigation and determination on that issue.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated August 2, 2005, reference 01, is affirmed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible. This case is remanded for a determination on the claimant's ability and availability to work.

sdb/kjw